

# UNCLE SAM'S NAVY BOYS

With the Marines



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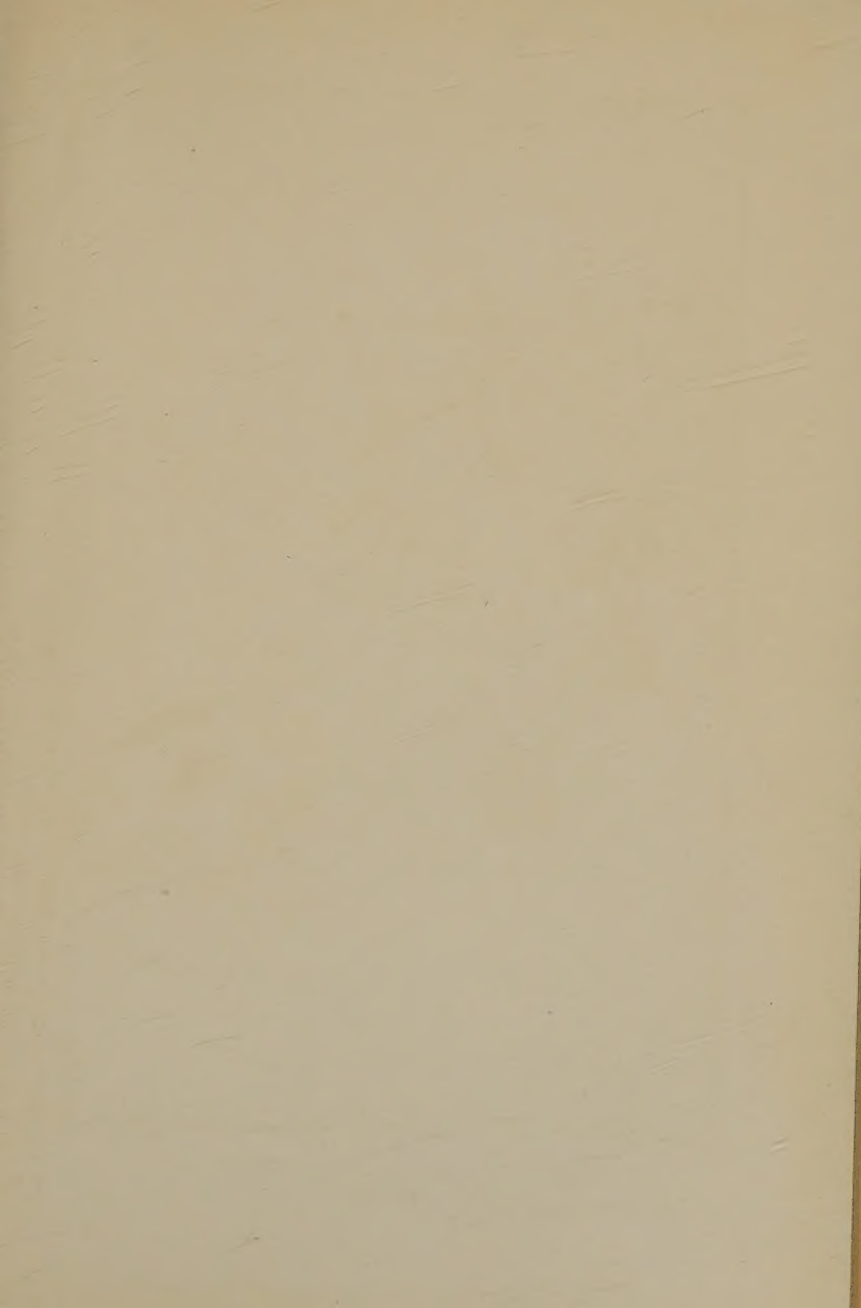


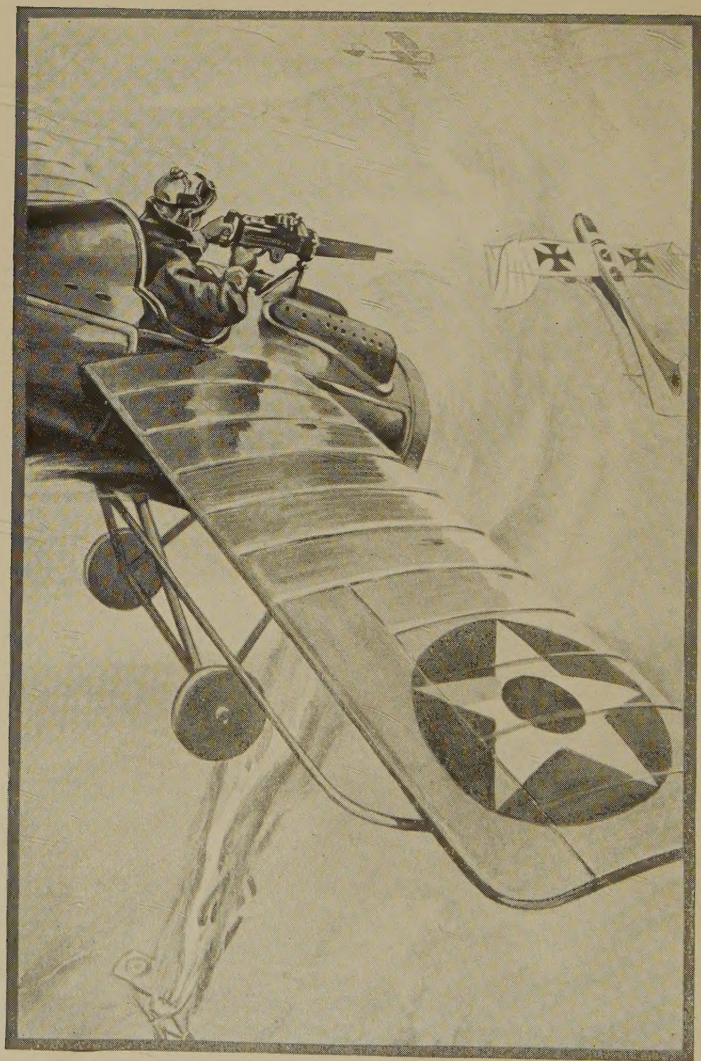












HE SAW THE TAUBE SLIDE INTO A TAIL SPIN.  
[Uncle Sam's Navy Boys with the Marines.]



# UNCLE SAM'S NAVY BOYS WITH THE MARINES

.. OR ..

## STANDING LIKE A ROCK AT CHATEAU THIERRY

*By*

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UNCLESAM'S NAVY BOYS AFLOAT, OR, THE  
RAID ALONG THE ATLANTIC SEABOARD;  
UNCLE SAM'S NAVY BOYS IN ACTION, OR,  
RUNNING DOWN ENEMY COMMERCE  
DESTROYERS; UNCLE SAM'S NAVY BOYS  
WITH THE SUBMARINE CHASERS, OR, ON  
PATROL DUTY IN THE NORTH SEA.



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## **NAVY SERIES**

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Uncle Sam's Navy Boys with the Submarine Chasers, or, On Patrol Duty in the North Sea.

Uncle Sam's Navy Boys Afloat, or, The Raid Along the Atlantic Seaboard.

Uncle Sam's Navy Boys in Action, or, Running Down Enemy Commerce Destroyers.

Uncle Sam's Navy Boys with the Marines, or, Standing Like a Rock at Chateau Thierry.

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# Uncle Sam's Navy Boys with the Marines;

OR

## Standing Like a Rock at Chateau Thierry

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### CHAPTER I.

#### BETWEEN THE LINES.

**A**N active young fellow in the garb of a United States marine came to a sudden halt while pushing through a dense woods in the North of France. To the south-east and at some distance away lay the River Marne, associated with the battle that early in the Great War decided the fate of Paris. Further on, and to the north, nestled the stricken town of Chateau Thierry, destined to become famous in the annals of the organization to which this nimble-footed lad belonged.

“There’s trouble of some kind going on over yonder,” he was saying to himself, at the same time staring toward a certain sector

where the trees lay in particularly dense formation; "either some Yank has butted into a Hun ambush, and is fighting for his life; or else it's one of those fiendish traps of Fritz. Better go slow, Elmer, my boy, if you don't want to land in a sweet mess. Easy now, son; remember you're on patrol duty, and not expected to stack up against the whole of the Crown Prince's army!"

While muttering after this fashion to himself the young marine was moving cautiously along in the direction from whence the significant sounds had come.

Every yard he covered brought him just that much nearer the scene; so he presently realized that there could be no mistaking the character of the strange noises being wafted to his ears.

Some unknown party was undoubtedly engaged in a life-and-death struggle with adversaries who, in point of numbers at least, must be in the ratio of two or three to one.

The athletic young chap with the red stripe running down each leg of his light-blue trousers, and wearing the low-vizored cap of the celebrated Marine Corps, hurried his movements now. He had suddenly caught a gasp-

ing exclamation, uttered amidst breaks that told of weariness, but in the plainest of United States language, that gave him a thrill:

“Take that—and that—you baby-killer—with Uncle Sam’s—compliments!”

This decided the wiry young Yankee who had called himself Elmer. He no longer considered caution, but leaped forward much as a half-starved wolf might spring at a deer.

The sounds of blows exchanged; of heavy breathing; of grunts and gurgles emanating from excited and stubborn men in deadly contact—all these told the story better than words could have done.

The brigade of American marines, “soldiers of the sea” as they had always been called, under the command of Major-General Bartlett, had arrived on the furiously disputed Chateau Thierry front just a short time before. Their presence was suspected by the Germans, though as yet no prisoners had been taken to prove the rumor true. The Hun officers scoffed at the idea of the “green Americans” being able to stand against the terrible “drive” before which the veteran French troops of Marshal Foch continually fell back, unable to withstand the mad-dog rushes of

the masses of Huns thrown against them with prodigal extravagance, as if human life were cheap when an object was to be attained.

As Elmer Ketcham suddenly broke through an intervening thicket he came full upon the tragedy that was taking place there under the trees that early summer day, for it was in the beginning of June.

Three men were engaged in the mêlée, striking at one another, and showing all the signs of being in deadly earnest. Two of them were German soldiers, as their spiked helmets proved, while the third wore garments similar to those Elmer himself sported, a fact that instantly enlisted his sympathy.

Although the odds were so heavily against him the marine seemed to be putting up a sturdy fight. When the newcomer glimpsed a figure stretched upon the ground close by, also garbed in the bottle-green of the German army, he realized that in the beginning there had been a trio of the Huns.

"Bully boy!" muttered the impulsive Elmer, in exultation; "I'd give you a helping hand if there were a dozen of the Huns on deck. Here's at you then. Hurrah! for Uncle Sam, and the good old U. S. A."



With that he rushed forward.

The Germans realized that after all their victory was not going to be so easily acquired. Still they were stubborn enough to refuse to give way just because the Yanks had evened matters up. One of them detached himself from the struggle, and turned to meet the new-comer.

He was a burly fellow, and apparently an old-timer. Elmer did not doubt but that the other had been through many of the hardest battles of the war now filling out its fourth year. It was easy then to understand just how such a veteran fighter might entertain a feeling of contempt for Americans who had never as yet known what it was to crouch in a muddy trench, or go over the top scores of times in making patrol raids, or in attacks on the enemy lines.

But then, like most of his comrades, this giant Prussian failed to take into consideration the fact that there was not a single member of that brigade of marines but who had been a picked man, subjected to the most exacting tests, and one of a thousand. He was not supposed to know that many of them had seen severe service in various parts of the

world, where revolutions sprang up, or United States consuls were threatened by bandit hordes.

Perhaps before he was much older that same Hun would awaken to the fact that Americans could fight like tiger-cats, once the opportunity opened. And before that same month of June came to a close the startling intelligence was bound to be communicated to that section of Hindenburg's army at Chateau Thierry in a startling manner, as history tells.

Elmer ducked just in time to escape being hit when the Hun fired. He imagined that the Germans had been figuring on taking the other marine prisoner so they could fetch him into camp and gain a certain amount of credit for capturing the very first American. If this were so, their plans had received a set-back with the arrival on the scene of the second Yank; and now it was a question of saving their own lives.

Perhaps it might have been wiser for Elmer to have simply shot the Hun down, since he carried a gun, and could easily have bagged his man. Somehow it went against his grain to do this. As yet he had never killed a human being; and if compelled to do such a thing he

infinitely preferred that it should come to pass in the heat of a hand-to-hand encounter.

So they went at it, hammer-and-tongs, dodging, thrusting, ducking, and giving as well as receiving blows in good earnest.

The advantage was with Elmer, for he came into the fight when the giant was more or less winded from his previous strenuous exertions. Besides that he was young, and as active as a cat. The marine drill had finished his education along the line of attack and defence, so that he soon had his adversary beginning to cast apprehensive glances to right and left as though looking for a chance to run.

All this while the other marine was struggling with the third Hun soldier. It could be seen that he was pretty well exhausted, after the gallant fight he had been putting up, though showing no sign of the "white feather;" since that is the one thing a marine abhors, preferring to die before giving in.

Elmer had already discovered that the face of his ally was streaked with red smears which told of wounds received. Then, too, the fact that his efforts gave positive signs of slackening announced his serious condition. Only for the arrival of this unexpected reinforcement

the brave fellow must ere now have been borne down under superior numbers, and found himself in the power of the Huns.

This fact made Elmer apprehensive. He must put on a spurt, and end the fight without further delay. Should the other marine succumb it would allow his opponent a chance to join the big Prussian who confronted the newcomer; and with the odds against him Elmer's task must be multiplied just that much.

Accordingly he gritted his teeth, and put new vigor into his attacks. His rapid movements seemed to fairly bewilder the other, though he managed to defend himself with considerable dexterity, being, as has been said before, a veteran, accustomed to all the tricks of the trade.

Both men were fighting with clubbed guns. Had he been given time Elmer might have jammed his bayonet into place, and staggered his opponent with some of the brilliant thrusts learned under one of the finest drill-masters of the Corps; but everything had happened so unexpectedly that there had been no opportunity for this.

More than once the guns crashed together in midair, wielded by the muscular arms of



the pair. Thus Elmer had a chance to show how well he had learned just how to guard himself against a descending blow, and return the same before his opponent could quite recover his balance.

Now he was pressing the big Prussian back step by step. The man had lost his confidence, and with that his last chance to win out. He had to confine his efforts entirely to defending himself against the furious attacks that were showered upon him; while his movements displayed signs of growing weakness, as well as consternation at realizing the fact that those Yankees could fight like demons after all.

There was indeed need of haste, for the exhausted marine whom he was bent on succoring was tottering, and ready to drop to the ground. Elmer changed his tactics, and so suddenly that he caught the giant napping. Before the Hun could gather himself together to meet the fresh line of assault that gun came against his bull-head with a crash that was sickening.

Down he dropped like a steer in the shambles. The fight in that quarter at least was over. Elmer whirled around, and just in time. The second German was starting toward him,

having managed to hurl the weakened marine to the ground.

He changed his mind of a sudden on discovering how matters stood. If this lightning fighter from across the sea could dispose of the big man so easily there could be little hope of his accomplishing anything. Besides, he may have been acquainted with a certain old couplet running:

“He who fights, and runs away,  
May live to fight another day.”

No matter, the last of the three Huns had a discreet strain in his make-up; and proved this by suddenly turning and running like mad. Elmer half raised his gun as though tempted to drop him, which he could easily have done, being one of the crack shots of his company. He shook his head in the negative, however. With two of the three Huns knocked out the victory seemed complete enough. Besides, he quailed at the idea of shooting even a brutish Hun in the back; it seemed a bit too much like wanton murder; though in the process of time that idea was apt to be knocked out of his head, after he had

with his own eyes seen more of the "frightfulness" perpetrated by those savage invaders of French soil.

This leniency came near costing him dear, for the fleeing man turned when some distance away, and deliberately shot at Elmer, who was starting to bend over the fallen marine.

The bullet sang past close to his ear, and irritated him. Whirling around he flung his gun to his shoulder, and sent a shot into the thicket where the swaying branches announced that the fugitive had plunged instantly after firing, as if frightened at his own temerity in inviting punishment. A yelp told that he had at least winged the other; and satisfied he need fear nothing further from that quarter Elmer hastened to bend over the chap his coming had saved from becoming the first prisoner of the Germans in this sector.

He was a young fellow like himself. The grime and blood that smeared his face proved an effectual mask, so Elmer, desirous of ascertaining just how seriously he might be injured, took his canteen, and using a portion of its contents, as well as his red bandana handkerchief, managed to clean away some of this mixture.

Just then the boy's eyes opened, and he stared up into the face above him.

"What! is it you, Elmer Ketcham?" came in a gasp from between his cracked lips.

"Amos Flagg! by all that's wonderful!" exclaimed Elmer. "Fancy our meeting away out here in France, we who lived in nearby towns on the Massachusetts shore!"

## CHAPTER II.

## THOSE WHO ARE FIRST TO FIGHT.

IT seemed to be one of those remarkable happenings that sometimes come about.

The chances favoring such a meeting were about as one in ten thousand, and yet it had actually occurred.

"I hope you're not hurt badly, Amos?" hurriedly remarked Elmer, whose first thought now was in connection with the personal well-being of his friend.

"Don't know what's wrong, but I guess there's nothing serious," came the ready answer. "Help me get on my pins, and I'll find out what's to pay, Elmer. Gee! but it's good for sore eyes to see you again. Do you know I haven't run across a single one of my old comrades since enlisting in the marines. Course I knew you and Tommie Sargent and Sandy Griswold had gone into the Fighting Corps; but never had the luck to bob up against any of you till now."



By the time he finished saying this Elmer had helped him on to his feet. Amos commenced feeling his various parts, and making all sorts of movements, as if to try his muscles. Several times he gave little grunts. That may have been when he discovered a sore spot, and felt the sudden twinge on pressure.

Elmer waited in some anxiety. When finally the other looked up with a sort of grin he understood that it was all right, and a sense of considerable relief swept over him.

"Everything serene, Elmer," said Amos, nodding his head encouragingly; "all small matters that hardly count. May be a bit stiff for a few days, but shucks! what of that? I've been just dying to have a turn at one of those Hun baby-killers, and say, they dropped down three at a pop on me. Well, did I turn and run? I guess not that you could notice any, Elmer. But all the same I'm right glad you came along when you did. Three was too big a meal for me to start business on."

At that Elmer laughed.

"Same old Amos, seems like, and greedy as ever for a racket!" he remarked.

He ought to know, since the other lived at Newburyport, situated on the Massachusetts

coast within seven miles of Elmer's own home town of Lynnhaven. Each place boasted of a fair High School, and of course there were rival athletic teams connected with these institutions of learning that contested for honors upon diamond and gridiron in summer and fall, as well as meeting in hockey matches and other athletic affairs at various seasons of the year.

Consequently Elmer and Amos were old friends. They had always fancied each other, and had they chanced to reside in the same town would undoubtedly have been firm chums.

"What's become of some of your mates in Lynnhaven, Elmer?" demanded the other, consumed with curiosity it appeared, that would not be denied, though the time and place hardly seemed fitting for an exchange of confidences. "There were some of them who went into the service before I enlisted, I remember—Jack Warren, for one; and also Andy Jennings. Know anything about those chaps?"

"Only a little, Amos," the other told him, taking a look toward one of the two fallen Huns, who was just then laboriously crawling.

off, grunting frequently as if in considerable pain.

"Tell me about them then, while I'm getting my wind back, so we can move along out of this nest of Huns," begged the other marine, stooping to pick up his gun, and looking it over to discover whether the weapon might still be in serviceable condition after the rough treatment it had passed through.

"That's easily done," chuckled Elmer. "Jack Warren was on the destroyer *Prentice*, you must know, when that German submersible visited Newport Harbor, and the next day sunk six or more steamers off the New England coast. Later on, when Uncle Sam climbed into the war his boat patrolled the Atlantic seaboard, looking for subs, and Hun raiders that were striking into our trade, and doing all sorts of daring stunts so as to paralyze our coast commerce. I had a letter from Jack telling me something about his luck in seeing service."\*

"Good for Jack! How about Captain Andy Jennings, with his speed launch *Argus*?" continued Amos. "He used to be

\*"Uncle Sam's Navy Boys Afloat." Also "Uncle Sam's Navy Boys in Action."

one of those slow chaps, thinking it too much of an effort to exert himself; but I guess now he had all that knocked out of him once he got in the scrap."

"I should say, yes," snapped Elmer, with kindling eyes. "It's been the making of Andy, let me tell you, Amos. You know Toby Jucklin went with him, because those two are inseparables, almost like the Siamese Twins in fact. His boat, being so large and speedy, was put on the job of patrolling the North Sea, looking for the U-boats that were lying in wait for British and American transports carrying our bully boys across the Atlantic. I also had a long letter from Andy just the other day, and he gave an account of his first adventure with a submarine. From the way he's started in to do business I rather think Andy is bound to come out of the scrap with flying colors, and a commission, or else be blown sky-high by a Hun torpedo."

"I'd like to read both those letters if the chance ever comes to get hold of the same, Elmer," remarked the other, eagerly. "As for me I haven't had the luck to hear a word from any of the old crowd. I consider myself

fortunate to get a home letter once a month, sometimes three delayed ones in a bunch."

"Oh! that's chronic with every buddie I know in the company," sniffed Elmer.

"It's just scandalous how the military postoffice authorities mix our mail up. Why, I haven't had a line now for five weeks. Hope my letters have better luck going across to America."

"That chap I knocked out seems to lie mighty quiet, Elmer; do you think he can be—dead?"

There was a little touch of concern in the voice of Amos Flagg, quite pardonable, considering the fact that this fighting business was as yet a novel experience to him. When he had lived another month such qualms would become entirely foreign to his nature; since there was in store for those marine such a baptism of blood, such an offering of young manhood on the altar of patriotism as had befallen but few veteran army corps, even among the French and British.

"Soon find out," said Elmer, trying himself to appear indifferent, and at the same time passing over to where the German soldier lay stretched out on the rough ground.



He made a superficial examination that seemed to satisfy him, for almost immediately he returned to his companion's side.

"How about it?" asked Amos, eagerly, trying at the same time to keep from displaying the queer feeling that clutched at his heart, if he was about to learn that he had taken human life for the first time in his experience as a soldier of the sea.

"Only stunned, it seems," replied Elmer, carelessly, to all appearances. "It would have served the old rascal right though if he had passed over; because I guess he's done heaps and heaps of shady things here and in Belgium. You did give him a jim dandy crack on the coco, Amos; got a lump there like a young baseball that's going to lay him up a while, and keep him out of mischief."

"Then he's coming-to again, I take it, from what you say, Elmer?"

"Be sitting up before a great while, and wondering if a mountain fell over his head," chuckled the other. "But seems to me we ought to be moving our pins out of this region. That chap who got away may run across more of the patrol, and fetch the mob around to gather us in."

"That's so," agreed the other, quickly. "They act as if crazy to grab a Yank to be Exhibit Number One. All the time they scrapped they kept urging me to give up decently, and not keep fighting till they had to kill me. As near as I could make out their fierce lingo they were promising that I'd be kept in clover as a prisoner. But I only hit the harder, and gave 'em to understand marines weren't built that way."

"It's getting late in the day, you notice, Amos."

"Sure thing," agreed the wounded marine, working one of his arms that had possibly been struck many times, and felt fairly sore.

"Both of us ought to be getting back to our commands, after being separated from the rest of our individual patrols; because I'm taking it for granted that's how you come to be out here in the forest, between the Huns and our trenches."

"Kind of that way, Elmer," came the answer, in a hesitating tone that caused the one addressed to eye Amos, as though entertaining a sudden suspicion there might be another reason for his presence, which he did not feel at

liberty to disclose, a military reason in the bargain.

Could it be that Amos was acting the part of a spy, or perhaps a courier taking important messages along the line? Elmer had several such thoughts flash through his mind, but the time was hardly suitable to devote himself to such side issues. If Amos did have a secret he ought not to try to pry into it, he considered, and therefore said nothing further along that particular line.

Before starting to leave the spot Elmer did a rather queer thing; but which showed how he had been taught to look out for trouble in advance. There were two guns on the ground, belonging to the pair of Huns faring so badly at the hands of the marines, the third man having carried his particular weapon away with him.

These Elmer picked up one after the other, and deliberately smashed by striking their butts against a rock that had a jagged crest; after which he tossed the remains contemptuously aside.

“Don’t want that skunk to get a crack at our backs when we can’t dodge,” he explained to his companion. “You see, he might be

playing 'possum on us. They do say these wily Huns try every kind of skin-game going; but they'll find us Yanks wideawake, and up to snuff. Ready now, Amos?"

"On deck, Elmer," cheerily replied the other, "and as we go along we can figure out what units we belong to. Oh! what wouldn't I give if only I might get shifted into your company. The days wouldn't seem so long then, when we found chances to talk over the good times we used to have back home."

"Now, that's a scheme we might manage to work, somehow or other, come to think of it, Amos," snapped Elmer, his face lighting up at the bare thought. "One thing sure, since we've run across each other we can try to keep in touch. Some fine day the chance might come to bring about a change for one or the other. Wouldn't it be fine if only it happened we got together."

"Huh! our chances are about one in a million," sneered Amos, evidently not of the same sanguine temperament as Elmer.

"Same thing would apply to our running across each other this afternoon," he was immediately told; "yet you see that was just what did come about. I'm going to live in

hopes, and at the same time pull every string I can find. You may notice that I'm a sergeant, Amos, while I see you've got a corporal's chevrons on your sleeve. Better still, I happen to be in the good graces of my captain; chanced to do him a bit of a favor that he magnifies beyond reason. So he'll certainly help bring us together, if the opening ever comes. Look back there, Amos, what do you see moving around the late battleground?"

"Why, that chap I pounded into insensibility is sitting up, I do believe, Elmer!"

The other gave vent to a short laugh.

"Just what he is doing, Amos. Shows you the value of looking ahead at all times. I've heard enough about these tricky Huns to suspect them of any dirty game. Now supposing I hadn't bothered about those two guns, what would hinder him from laying hold of the same, and giving us a bullet apiece in the back when we wouldn't be in shape to duck?"

"Nothing, for a fact, Elmer," admitted the second marine, and hastily adding: "There, he's on his feet now, and running over to where you tossed the broken guns down. See him snatch one up, and then the other. How furiously he throws each away again, as if



mad as hops. Yes, he meant to shoot us un-awares, Elmer, he certainly did. Thanks to your smartness he's powerless to do anything."

"The viper!" hissed the other; "do you know, I'm almost tempted to let him have a dose of his own medicine, for I could nail him from here as easy as falling off a log. But I guess I wouldn't feel easy after doing such a thing; so let it pass; and we'll meander along."

That particular Hun might never know how lucky he was to have as his opponents two such high-minded Yankee lads. Any Frenchman, Canadian, British "Tommie," or Australian would have considered it his bounden duty to rid the tortured world of one more vandal, given such a glorious chance; nor would his conscience have troubled him in the least thereafter on account of the deed. They had seen things calculated to make them immune against granting mercy to any Prussian fighter.

It was certainly drawing rapidly near twilight. Already the sun had gone down, and there in the forest shadows were creeping forth from the coverts where they must have lain hidden the long warm day just passed.

The pair had not gotten far away from the scene of their late encounter when Elmer gripped the arm of his companion, at the same time hissing:

“Didn’t start soon enough after all, it seems like, Amos!”

“What’s the matter; seen anything suspicious, old top?” demanded the other, showing by his words that he must have been associating with “Tommies” during the weeks when his regiment was taking its first lessons in trench life at the front, in preparation for the time when Pershing’s forces would be called into the fray.

## CHAPTER III.

## GIVING THE HUNS THE SLIP.

**J**UST what I have, Amos," Elmer told him, at the same time drawing the other down behind a leafy covert. "Skulking figures on the right, and now I can glimpse others on the left. That skunk I let go has gone and fetched the rest of his Hun patrol down on us."

Amos began immediately to finger the lock of his gun. It was a significant action, though just what might be expected of a marine; for every member of that force must be a selected man, a natural-born fighter, and absolutely without fear. There never was a craven known in the Corps, and never will be. Man for man they are absolutely unsurpassed by any force on earth; indeed, the only peers who might match them would possibly be the Northwest Mounted Police of Canada and the famous mounted constabulary of rural Pennsylvania, men who daily ride with their lives in the hol-

low of their hands, and hesitate at nothing when on duty bound.

"I can be counted on for four, if only my gun doesn't jam, Elmer," he was saying in a quiet tone.

"Good boy!" muttered the other, admiringly; "but perhaps we may be able to give the wolves the slip yet. It's getting dark fast now, you notice, on account of the clouds gathering overhead. Perhaps we'll have a bit of a storm yet. I've a hunch we can creep along in these bushes, and make it hard for the Huns to glimpse us. Both of us have learned the game when sneaking up on game. Keep close to my heels, Amos; and if I shoot you follow suit. Get me?"

"Sure thing," came the whispered reply, showing that Amos was wideawake, and able to "paddle his own canoe," as he would have termed it if asked.

Apparently he had quite forgotten all about his sore muscles and strained tendons, judging from the clever way in which he imitated every movement made by his companion. When one's life is the stake played for minor things can be readily ignored, as almost every boy has proved for himself in an emergency.

A cut or a bruise may seem very painful; but let the boat suddenly capsize, and see how utterly it is forgotten, and that hand be made to do its share in keeping a fellow's head above the surface of lake or river.

As they thus crawled along the pair began to hear sundry calls and whistles. These they well knew were uttered by some of the German soldiers, who had lost track of the fugitives, and were sending signals back and forth as they started to thrash the bushes, at the same time peering into every promising retreat that could shelter a human being.

By degrees these grew into angry calls, showing that the temper of the searchers was being sorely tried by this unaccountable disappearance on the part of their intended quarry.

Elmer and Amos kept moving like a pair of stalking panthers. They were heading in a direction that seemed to offer the most promise, though at any moment discovery was liable to come. In case one of the eager Huns did pounce upon them he was likely to personally rue his act; for a Yankee gun would be apt to wind up his career in a hurry. Those marines are taught to shoot from the hip, and to get in the first blow when trouble impends.



It is hard on the other fellow, true enough, but regulations must be carried out, come what will, since rules are made to be obeyed.

Several times it seemed as though discovery could not be avoided, when there came a slashing in the bushes, and loud grunting, as a German prodded his bayonet into dark cran- nies, and between close-growing trees, in hopes of impaling a hiding Yank with the cold steel.

Neither of the marines dared move hand or foot while waiting results; in fact they almost forbore breathing temporarily. The wicked swish of that ramming bayonet gripped them with a sensation that was far from pleasant; it was not difficult in imagination to feel it jabbed into their bodies, thrust with all the muscular power of the snarling Hun who wielded the gun. Both kept their faces turned toward the danger point, and Elmer had his gun held in such a way that he could press the waiting trigger, so as to get results in the twinkling of an eye.

On both occasions, however, the threatening danger faded away. Either the searcher took a notion to turn aside, or else something attracted his attention in another quarter; which was perhaps fortunate for the hiding

marines, and doubly so in the case of Fritz, for he would surely have been shot down when discovery could no longer be avoided.

Nevertheless it proved to be somewhat of an exciting episode for both Elmer and Amos. They were comparatively new at such adventures, since up to now their education along the duties of marines had been confined to service aboard ship; or a severe course of drilling under competent officers who had served their time in nearly every part of the world, both civilized and savage.

Presently Elmer believed he saw an opportunity to continue the creeping movement, and as it was their desire to avoid further contact with such an overwhelming number of the enemy he gave his comrade a tap with his foot to attract his attention; after which he started to crawl off.

Looking back presently, he found that the other was keeping in touch with him, being close enough to be reached in case there arose any further need of signalling. The eager Huns were still continuing their urgent search, widening their scope as they met with successive failures.

Such was the tenseness of the situation

that Elmer felt a thrill spin through his system when all of a sudden a loud shout of triumph broke out, as though one of the Germans believed he had made a joyous discovery. Apparently he had come upon something at which he was making frantic jabs with his bayonet, all the while calling to his comrades, or else saying insulting things concerning the American "pigs," that if understood by the pair might have caused their ears to burn.

It was all a deep mystery to the concealed couple until they heard a sudden shrill squeal as a commotion arose in the underbrush. Some unwieldy object on four legs made a reckless dive toward the Hun soldier, and getting between his legs succeeded in upsetting him, amidst frantic yells of astonishment, as well as shrieks of laughter from his comrades.

"A hog!" murmured Elmer, partly for the benefit of his partner, who might not be situated so well for seeing as he chanced to be.

Which was just what it turned out to be. Some French peasant's porker, hidden in the woods to escape raiding parties of foragers, had been run into by the searcher, and after being jabbed by the point of the bayonet bolted. In its flight it had unwittingly managed

to knock over the cause of its sudden pain, which might be called an act of retributive justice.

Quick to see the opportunity to advance the cause of their escape, Elmer signalled to his companion, and once more they were on the move. With the German patrol dashing toward the spot from various quarters it seemed the part of wisdom to clear out as soon as possible.

Again and again they found it best to lie still and make no move. That was when a burly figure crashed through the undergrowth close by, anxious to be in at the taking of the Yanks. Fortunately none of the oncoming Huns happened to trip over either of the marines, a possibility that always existed.

By the time the loud talking and coarse laughter died away in their rear they had managed to put considerable distance between themselves and the danger point. Elmer began to believe they would get out of the scrape with full honors. True they might not have any German helmets to display as evidence of their prowess; but at least the experience was bound to prove valuable to them. Then again the many slight wounds which both could

show, especially Amos, would go as conclusive evidence substantiating their claim as to having met the enemy, and been in a scrap, something calculated to make them the envy of all their pals.

The growing darkness also assisted them in making their exit from the scene, which had by this time ceased to interest them, since they could hardly be expected to hanker after battling with a dozen experienced Huns.

Elmer no longer kept to his hands and knees. He had risen to his feet, though continuing to exercise a certain degree of caution by crouching more or less; and of course the other marine copied his action, as if somehow recognizing that a sergeant took precedence over a mere corporal when together on a hike.

"Guess we've given the Huns the go-by, Amos?" ventured Elmer, with confidence in his manner, even though he spoke in a low whisper.

"Glad you think so," answered the other. "Only I do wish we'd been able to fetch the whole three of 'em along with us. Be some feather in our caps, believe me, to run a bunch of the baby-killers into camp."



"Which camp?" queried Elmer, in a tantalizing tone of voice.

"Thunder! yes, since we belong to different units of the marines," commented Amos, dejectedly. "I somehow seemed to think we were going in together."

"Well, why shouldn't we?" demanded Elmer, boldly. "I happen to know where to locate my company's camp along the trench line, and it surely must be closer than yours can be. Besides, your hurts ought to be looked after, Amos."

"Shucks! they don't amount to a great deal! I'd feel like a tenderfoot going up to a field hospital surgeon, or nurse, and asking to be bandaged up. They might want me to lie low for a week or so, too, and do you think I'd stand for that right now, when the glorious day the marines have been waiting for so long is going to blossom out, with the Huns driving ahead as they are, like a steam-engine? Besides, well, I've just *got* to hike along again; been held up too long as it is."

Again did Elmer have that faint suspicion flash through his mind, to the effect that possibly his old comrade, Amos Flagg, was hiding his light under a bushel; and that he might

even then be on some special duty for his commander. Amos had ever been known as a perfect dare-devil, fearing nothing, ready to accept any risks if only he saw a faint chance to get through, and win out. What better man could be found to carry important dispatches that had to be personally delivered to General Bartlett, or some one just under the commander-in-chief?

"If that's the case then, son," he went on to say, "let's exchange confidences far enough to know where each is located. Then we'll wait, and see what fortune brings us in the way of making an exchange. We may be happy yet, Amos."

So they talked in low tones as they walked along, keeping a bright lookout for any signs of other enemies. As they were now drawing closer to the American lines the chance of striking hostile forces was becoming less and less. Daring indeed would those Huns be who ventured to prowl so near the trenches of the Allies, and with Americans on guard at that.

"I felt a drop of rain then, sure I did!" exclaimed Amos, presently, coming to a full pause while speaking.

"Yes, it's going to come down before

long," added the other, indifferently; as soldiers who had become used to almost anything this thing of getting their jackets wet through held little of concern for them; though both could remember the time when they would have run like wildfire to seek shelter from a downpour, and not two years back either, showing what army life had done for them in the way of endurance.

"Then you won't come with me to camp, Amos?" remarked Elmer, for the last time.

"Out of the question this trip, old fellow. Can't explain just why, but I've got to hurry along now; lost too much time already, as it is. But you can wager I'm going to try my level best to get changed to your squad, if there's anything coming to me further along as—well, a sort of reward of merit, you know, on account of duty well done. Now don't ask me a thing, Elmer. You're at liberty to think all you like, and hit or miss I wish you joy in stabbing the truth. Mebbe later on I'll be at liberty to explain. So good-bye. When writing home tell them you saw me, and what a nice little time we had with the baby-killers."

He held out his hand, upon which Elmer fell with positive vehemence. How fine it was

to meet with an old comrade of those glorious times that seemed hull-down in the school-day past, though less than two years had crept by since pitted against each other they strove with might and main on the gridiron to win for their beloved schools.

"It's been a red-letter day for me, as sure as you're born, Amos!" he said, enthusiastically. "How little did either of us suspect this morning that we'd run across each other before night set in. I can believe almost anything is apt to happen after this."

"Sometimes the old world *does* seem mighty small," agreed the other. "I've heard of fellows who met on the top of the great pyramid in Egypt, coming from the same street in a small American town, and neither knowing the other had taken a trip abroad. Good luck to you, Elmer!"

"Same to you, Amos, and say, please have those hurts attended to just as soon as you get a chance. 'Cause why? Well, ugly stories have been going around to the effect that some of those Huns put a bit of poison on their bayonets. It's an awful thing to say, but they've been accused of even worse than that, poisoning wells, and as you say, murdering helpless

babies. Brutes who would be guilty of such crimes can't grumble if accused of everything vile in the calendar. But say you'll have them looked after, Amos, if only to satisfy me."

"All right then, I promise, though I don't take much stock in such talk, Elmer. Here goes, then."

With that he wrung the other's hand, loath to let it go, turned in his tracks, and walked off in another direction, with Elmer staring after him in a puzzled way.

## CHAPTER IV.

## IN THE RED TRIANGLE HUT.

**A**N hour after Elmer parted from his Newburyport friend of long ago he was once more in camp, if the burrows of the marines deserved such a name. Some distance in the rear of the first-line trenches they had dugouts without end, in which those off duty could snatch such sleep and rest as was allowed them during such trying times.

By now the boys were becoming somewhat accustomed to the queer life of the dugouts. They accepted all discomforts in good humor, and made jokes of what at home would have upset them completely. Such is soldiering, when even the worst spoiled boy at home becomes hardened to make-shifts, and enjoys small things that previously he would have treated with the utmost scorn.

Although up near the front they were not without certain pleasures. There were the Red Triangle huts of the Y.M.C.A.; and brave



girls to wait upon the fighters when they gathered to smoke, and make little purchases, or at certain times to sing some of the old songs that were so dear to their hearts; for strange as it may appear, musical instruments had a part in the life at the front, and numerous little old-fashioned pianos were even known to be in use at places where Hun shells occasionally dropped.

The bringing of the marines to this front was in the nature of a tremendous experiment as yet. No one could exactly prophesy just how it would likely turn out, and anxious hearts awaited the first meeting between these new fighters from over the sea and the victorious hosts of the Kaiser, flushed with their amazing success in sweeping the wearied French back before their mighty rushes.

The great and long heralded German Spring drive had been going on now for some time. Hindenburg had made vast calculations and preparations in order that this might settle the war for once and all. The legions of dark-green garbed Teutons seemed as inexhaustible as the leaves of the forest, or grains of sand on the sea-shore. Apparently the Hun commanders were ready to sacrifice any num-

ber of men if by so doing they might attain their ends.

Gallantly had the worn-out French struggled to hold. By sheer force of overwhelming numbers they were compelled to give way. Day after day told the same sad story. The French were fast losing confidence in their ability to stem the awful tide that was being hurled against them. They fought doggedly and made every sacrifice, yet seemingly without avail.

Then too the British armies had been pressed back until it almost seemed as if they would be "pushed into the sea," as the Huns loudly boasted must be the case. At last came that famous order from General Haig demanding that they set their backs against the wall, and die in their places, before retreating a step further.

It was at this most critical time in the history of the Great War that America stepped into the breach. Pershing had told Clemenceau that everything America had in France—men, munitions, supplies—could be drawn upon by Marshal Foch as he saw fit. And to the marines was to be given the honor of being

the first corps of Uncle Sam's boys to meet the shock of battle.

There was suspense all over France, where the situation was fully understood. How would these new fighting men come through the test? There could be little doubt but that Hindenburg would hurl his finest picked troops against the lines of blue. If in this initial engagement the Yanks could be driven in a panic the effect upon the final outcome of the war was a foregone conclusion.

But Major General Bartlett had such confidence in the "sticking" qualities of his men that for one he never doubted the outcome. Had he not seen them tested in many quarters of the globe, and always with the same result? According to his mind those Germans were about due to meet with the greatest surprise of their lives.

Elmer found himself somewhat tired after such a vigorous day. He made his report, and then sought the particular dugout where he had already spent some nights in snatching such sleep as was allowed under the circumstances.

Lights were tabooed as a rule, but since the clouds had passed away the heavenly bodies

afforded sufficient illumination for any one to make his way around. Of course there was always more or less movement, with batteries changing base; French tanks, large and small, rumbling toward the front so as to get in line for the coming action, though manned for the most part by Yanks; fresh troops coming up from the supply depots away back in the rear; ambulances arriving, and departing on their errands of mercy, sometimes fetching new nurses for the Red Cross service, or taking away cases destined for base hospitals down Paris way.

All these things were already becoming familiar sounds and sights to Elmer; so that they did not rivet his attention as at first. Even the airplanes that came and went, guarding the camp against a night attack on the part of the enemy, held his notice for but a brief time as he listened to the clatter of their propellers, and saw the valiant pilots and observers take their places, or jump to the ground from a returning machine.

After getting something to eat Elmer made his way toward the big dugout where the Red Triangle sign hung out. Every fellow who could get a chance invariably sought this

amusement centre, to catch a whiff of the "home" atmosphere, to enjoy the music, perhaps taste of the delicious cookies and doughnuts and pies that Salvation Army lassies had concocted for their enjoyment.

But above all it was fine to rest their eyes on the faces of the girls from the homeland, those brave attendants who had volunteered to sail across the submarine infected seas to do duty with the A.E.F. forces, just as patriotic in their way as any fellow who shouldered a gun at the first call.

Elmer was hurrying now, not that he felt an aching void at thought of crullers or pie, but because of a certain bustling little worker whose face often appealed to him in waking or sleeping hours. In the short time he had known Nellie they had become particularly good friends. She was a diminutive creature, with brown hair, and large eyes of the same color. All Elmer knew about her was that she had come over with some of the first volunteer workers of the Red Triangle, and for many moons been industriously doing her small part to make the doughboys contented with their lot across seas.

Her last name was Gwynne, though some-

thing seemed to tell Elmer that she also had French blood in her veins; she may have incidentally mentioned the fact herself at some time or other, while they chatted. He had not thought anything of it save to realize how pretty Nellie Gwynne must have an additional interest in this great task of trying to save poor France from the invading hordes of robber Huns that had descended upon her northern borders, and still threatened the beloved Paris in Hindenburg's latest and most terrible "drive."

Somehow it seemed as though Elmer had the inside track with Nellie. She enjoyed her chats with him when work was a bit slack, and many of the other fellows envied him his privileges, for the girl was very popular with them all.

On this night in particular it struck Elmer that Nellie did not appear quite so jolly as usual. There was a wistful look on her face, he noticed several times, when she sat there, and the conversation lagged while business was slack; and always when looking at him.

Somehow it struck Elmer that something might have occurred to bring her face to face with trouble. A longing to be of assistance to



Nellie took possession of his heart. He wished she might think fit to confide in him.

Finally, as the evening began to wear on, and she came back once more to sit on the other side of the rude counter behind which the girls conducted their operations, Elmer boldly opened the subject.

"There was mail reached the front today, I'm told," he observed; "but I wasn't one of the lucky ones to draw a prize."

"Lots of us were disappointed," she assured him; "poor Sallie Collins seemed quite sick over not hearing from home. She has an invalid mother in Boston, and the last news was alarming. Poor girl, we feel so sorry for her."

Then it could not have been a letter that caused that serious look to spread over Nellie's pretty face from time to time, Elmer concluded. He grew bolder in his desire to be of assistance to her.

"Please excuse me for saying it, but something is worrying you, I know," he told her. "I wish I could be of assistance. If there is anything I could do, won't you let me try, Miss Nellie?"

A wave of color swept over her face, while

the brown eyes glowed with what he believed to be satisfaction. Then he had not offended her by being so bold; she looked about before replying, and finally said:

"It is kind of you to make such a blind offer, and do you know I am tempted to tell you something that has really been causing me a whole lot of worry lately, since we heard what dreadful things those Huns have been doing in the country far beyond Chateau Thierry, burning houses, and oppressing the poor people in every brutal way they could think of."

"I hope you will," he hastily told her. "If I could help in any way I'd be mighty glad to do it. There isn't a fellow who comes to this hut, though, I guess, but who'd feel proud of the same privilege."

"Perhaps the chance may never come to you," she went on, with a little shake of her head; "but no harm can follow my telling you my poor little secret. In the first place you must know then that I have French blood in my veins."

He laughed as he quickly remarked:

"I suspected that much from certain things you've said, and the clever way you talked with some of the natives a while back. Then

again you seemed to be tremendously aroused every time we sang the *Marsellaise*. I guess it acts that way on every person whose folks once came from France."

"Yes, it thrills me to the heart, and I feel something of the same spirit that must have overwhelmed Joan of Arc when the enemies of France were threatening to overrun the entire country, and she felt the inspiration to place herself at the head of the French army, to lead them to victory. But then this secret of mine is only a little private matter, and does not in any way connect with the issues of the war; so I am not dreaming dreams of becoming a second Joan."

"Still, it does concern your happiness," he insisted.

"To a certain extent," she admitted, "though I ought to be ashamed to think of such a thing as money, or valuables in any shape when so many thousands of these poor French people have not even roofs over their heads, and would starve only for the benevolence of our American women."

Just then there was a call for her services, and Nellie had to slip away. After a bit she came back again to where Elmer impatiently

awaited her. He felt more or less satisfaction in the thought that no matter how trivial her troubles might prove to be she had selected him as the one in whom to confide, and from whom to exact some favor.

“My mother’s name was Maillard,” Nellie went on to say. “And she had an old aunt known far and wide as Madame Maillard, who lived in quite a pretentious mansion in this sector of France. Indeed, the town where her home was located is named Bouresches, and it lies not a great many miles toward the north of Chateau Thierry, being a place of considerable importance.

“When the Germans flowed across the border in overwhelming numbers, and occupied all this corner of France, my great aunt did not have time to escape from her ancestral home. No one will ever know what she suffered at their hands, though we can give a guess after hearing the terrible stories that are reported every day.

“I do not know even how she finally managed to get a letter safely through the enemy lines so that it finally reached us in America just before I was sailing for my post here with the Red Triangle forces; but she was clever

enough to do it. Apparently it was simply an ordinary letter, telling that she managed to get on with the German officers who were quartered in her house, but also incidentally warning my mother that since she was so old and feeble she could hardly expect to see any of her kindred again.

“Something about the letter attracted my attention, I need not tell you what it was; but as I had always been quite clever at solving puzzles of all kinds I presently discovered there was a secret communication back of the words used to communicate these commonplace facts.

“Once my interest and curiosity were aroused I studied the letter more and more, for my mother had allowed me to take it aboard the steamer. And in the end I managed to get a clue that opened up the secret. Following up the lead I finally had picked out a sentence that was meant to be hidden from the scrutinizing eyes of the Germans.”

Nellie paused when she reached this point and looked cautiously about her. But apparently no one was paying the least attention to them, save a few marines who cast envious glances toward Elmer and the little charmer,

as if they wished the Fates might turn some of their favors in another direction.

Apparently satisfied, Nellie produced a little handbag, which she opened, to draw forth a small notebook, perhaps her diary in which was entered each day's happening while at the front.

From between the pages of this she extracted a slip of paper which was placed in Elmer's extended hand, and immediately gripped his attention.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE NIGHT AIRPLANE RAID.

THAT is what I picked out of the body of the letter, and for an old lady to originate such a clever camouflage was I think very smart," Nellie was saying.

What Elmer read was a simple sentence:

"All I possess in the way of valuables I have secreted under the hearth-stone—look for it there if ever you come to gaze upon the ruins of Charlevoi Manse."

Elmer nodded his head and smiled.

"If she succeeded in getting that past those treasure-hunting Hun officers," he told the girl, "I should say your aunt was pretty clever indeed. Now what is it you would like me to do, Nellie?"

"I am entrusting it all to your hands, you see," she announced, with a look that thrilled the young marine. "If all goes well, and in due time our boys reach Bouresches, will you find out where the ruins of my aunt's home

stand, and try to secure what she hid there? It is to be my legacy, no matter how great or small, and I should appreciate it more than I can tell you."

"I only hope I may be given the chance to serve you in that way," Elmer hastened to say. "Certainly I give you my word. And I'm glad at the same time to know you have such faith in the Americans starting to drive the Huns back, after taking Chateau Thierry."

"Oh! how can I doubt that, after watching what is going on here, and knowing the character of the marines?" she quickly retorted. "Nothing will make them turn back, once they have taken their stand, absolutely nothing can. The traditions of the corps would forbid such a thing as giving way. I firmly believe those Germans are going to meet with the greatest shock of their lives when they come up against the Yanks."

"It's certainly great to hear you say so, Miss Nellie," Elmer assured her, "and with regard to your mission all I ask is the privilege of once getting near that town, and I'll promise to find out whether the hiding-place of the old madame's treasure-trove has been discovered or not."

"The one thing I fear above all else is that he may have managed to get there ahead of you," she remarked.

"Please tell me who is meant by that," begged Elmer.

"Oh! I forget that I had not mentioned my cousin to you up to now," Nellie replied. "He has figured in numerous letters received in the past from this same old great aunt of mine, and always she gave us to understand how he was endeavoring to influence her to leave what she had to *him*, instead of to me, the niece she had not seen for many years, and half an American at that."

"Of course this chap must be a Frenchman then?" he hinted.

"Intensely so," came the ready answer. "I suppose he is an officer in the army, though I have not heard anything about that. His name is Antoine LaSalle Maillard."

Elmer gave a start.

The name was very familiar to him. Indeed, he could picture then and there the one who claimed it. Now he understood why Maillard had struck him as familiar the very moment Nellie had spoken it.

His thoughts flew back to Paris at the time

when, having been given several days' leave, he had haunted all the places of greatest interest in the French capital. He had met the voluble Frenchman who seemed to take such a deep interest in him, and asked so many questions connected with the advent of the American forces.

At the time Elmer had been on his guard, and given cautious answers. Something seemed to warn him against being too free with his tongue, especially when with strangers. And he could remember thinking how it was even possible that this inquisitive Frenchman, who said his name was Antoine Maillard, and that he was in the secret employ of the Government, might even turn out to be a German spy, one of those clever chaps who posed as natives, and had a way for sending valuable information to the Headquarters of the invading forces.

Something about his manner must have caught the attention of Nellie, for she was soon saying:

"Can it be possible that you have even met this cousin of mine, Antoine?"

"Strange as it may seem, I fancy I have," he told her, and then went on to explain,

though refraining from mentioning his suspicions, and the fact that at the time he had taken a peculiar dislike to the talkative young Frenchman.

"Have you ever seen this Antoine, Miss Nellie?" he continued.

"Not since I was a small girl and he a tall young chap just out of school, and very overbearing in his attitude toward his American cousin. That was when my mother and myself paid a visit one summer to my great aunt. But just before the war started, in a letter we had a picture of a group of relatives, and Antoine was a member of it; so I know what he looked like after he became a man."

"This chap was tall and slender. He wore the bit of a mustache adopted by many of our officers since coming over-seas, and which looks so ridiculous to most of us younger fellows. He also wore glasses, and had long wavy hair that made him resemble Paderewski not a little. How does that description compare with the Antoine of the family group?"

"I think you must have run across my cousin for a fact," she announced; "for everything you say hits him exactly. And even your mention of the great Polish pianist makes me

more certain, because as a boy Antoine seemed to want to make himself look like the famous Paderewski. How strange that such a thing should occur."

Elmer admitted that it did seem odd, though he had known just as singular things to happen before.

"Even today I ran up against one of my old comrades of my school-days," he explained, and at her eager request went on to narrate what had happened while he was separated from the balance of the patrol with which he had started out to take a look through the woods lying between the hostile lines.

This took the conversation away from the subject of the hidden treasure, and the French cousin who yearned to figure as the old Madame's sole heir. Elmer, however, had jotted down all the essential facts in his memory, to be called upon if ever the chance arose, and he found himself near the town of Bouresches; for he felt that it would be a feather in his cap could he but serve Miss Nellie in locating her legacy.

As the night deepened many of the sounds that had continued during the day and early evening gradually died away. Of course it was



never really quiet along this sector taken over by the American marines; but in comparison with the racket that continued during the day-time it might be said to be in a slumbrous condition.

Far away murmurs came to the ear like the fretful roll of the surf heard at a distance. No one paid the slightest attention to them now. It was nearing closing time, when the hut must be vacated so as to allow the hard-worked attendants an opportunity to secure some needed rest in preparation for another day of toil.

Without warning it burst upon them.

There was a terrific crash, a shudder of the earth underfoot, and a convulsive heave that brought every one to his or her feet. Several of the girls uttered half-suppressed shrieks, fearing the worst. All of the marines made a bolt for the exit, though fortunately there chanced to be only a limited number present, most of them having sought their billets some time before.

Out they piled, bent on seeing what was going on, reckless of the danger such action involved. Nellie too had jumped up. She turned an anxious face toward Elmer, who sought to calm her distress.

"It was a bomb, all right" he told her, "but since it's exploded there's no more danger to be feared from that source."

"An aerial raid, do you mean?" she demanded, with her hands up to her ears as if tempted to shut out all sounds in expectation of further explosions.

"Fritz has come over to see if he can shoot up another field hospital, like he did that last time," Elmer went on to say.

He was interrupted by another heavy crash, though at a little distance away. That settled it in his mind. The Huns had sent a flotilla of airplanes across to bombard the place where they strongly suspected the Americans were located. No doubt it was a part of their policy to try and shatter the nerve of these newcomers in the beginning, so as to unfit them for the fighting that was near at hand.

It only showed how little they knew of Yankee pluck and nerve, to allow themselves to think such a thing as that could alarm those picked fighters, who were doubtless piling out of their dugouts as if called to a dance, eager to see all that went on, and making a picnic of the occasion.

The explosions continued, now near, and again more distant, showing that there must be many airplanes engaged in this pleasant duty of shooting up the camp.

"Some of our pilots will be getting after them soon, I guess," Elmer remarked, after this had kept up for some time. "I'd like to see what happens then. If you don't mind being left alone here I'll step out for a look. I've never seen a battle in the air at night-time up to now."

"And I'd like to go along," Nellie told him, briskly. "It must be a rare sight, and something never to be forgotten. May I, please?"

"That's jolly!" ejaculated the young fellow, taking her by the arm. "Only I do hope none of their old bombs come our way. I really think they've shifted their location by now, for the shocks are less violent."

"Yes, and I fear they have turned again to the field hospital," said Nellie. "How can those Huns be so fiendish as to want to drop their awful bombs on the poor wounded, and the brave Red Cross nurses who attend to Germans as well as our own boys?"

"Because they know they are in a losing game!" snapped Elmer, between his set teeth,

“and feel ugly toward everything in the whole world.”

They reached the exit.

One or two of the other girls hovered about the opening as if tempted to peep out; but each time their fears overcame them, for they would draw back shuddering when the next bright flash came, accompanied by the dreadful crash.

So the pair passed out.

Somehow Elmer seemed to feel a sense of proprietorship toward the pretty Red Triangle worker who thus entrusted her safety to his care. Then too had she not selected him among all the visitors at the hut with whom to confide her secret, and ask his advice? This night raid from the skies on the marine camp might not be such a wholly bad thing after all; since it gave him the privilege of holding hands with pretty Nell Gwynne, as they shared the danger in common.

There was plenty to see, it turned out, if one did not mind the chance of being made the victim of an exploding bomb. These were still detonating from time to time, though possibly the Huns had unloaded most of their stock by now, and thought to slip back to the home han-

gars before the Yankee airmen could mount and engage them in battle.

Dark flitting shapes could be seen far above. They darted in strange curves and with lightning-like zigzag movements from side to side. From some of these there were emitted peculiar staccato stabs of flame as they swung around in space. To Elmer it was all plain enough, for he knew these eccentric flashes were caused by the rapid firing of the machine guns.

"The boys are up and at 'em!" he exclaimed, as though greatly pleased. "Now the Huns will learn what a Yank can do when he sets his mind at any task. But then our aces in the old Lafayette Escadrille told them that much long ago."

The spectacle became even more animated as the seconds winged into minutes. It was like a grand Fourth of July fireworks celebration to the clusters of Americans who strained the muscles of their necks while watching all that was going on in the upper realms.

By now the dangerous bombs had stopped falling. Either the supply had given out, or else those Hun aviators had all they could attend to in dodging the savage attacks of the

aroused Yankee pilots who had risen like a flock of birds to attack them.

Nellie suddenly uttered a cry.

“Oh! look, isn’t that one of the planes falling?” she exclaimed, clutching her companion by the arm; and giving him quite a little thrill by so doing.

Elmer had himself taken note of the same circumstance. What seemed to be a descending object swathed in smoke was heading toward the earth far below. Undoubtedly one of the aerial combatants had been hard hit, and was put out of the fighting.

Even as they looked there was a great burst of flame, showing that the gasoline tank had exploded. Just then they saw a small object leave the falling plane. Elmer could guess that it was the pilot, making a mad leap; not in hopes of saving his life, for that was lost beyond all redemption, but simply because of his horror of being burned to a crisp.

Still the rat-tat of machine guns came to the ears of those below, as the determined Yanks kept at the heels of their fleeing foes, and continued to batter them with their weapons. Fritz had swooped down on the Ameri-



cans and started trouble, but it was coming back on his own head in two-fold measure.

And Elmer hoped this would prove a true sample of what was coming when the "grand affair" was staged, with Yank pitted against Teuton.

## CHAPTER VI.

SPY, OR SECRET AGENT, WHICH?

**I**T'S all over but the shouting," affirmed Elmer, presently.

"Then you think the Huns have departed for good, do you?" Nellie asked, as if wishing to have him confirm her suspicions.

"Yes, they've made off for their home camp, all but that unlucky chap who took such a cropper; for I'm almost sure it was a German machine we saw afire," he told her.

"I do hope none of their terrible bombs found the hospital," Nellie went on to say. "They try to hide its position latterly, because the Huns refuse to follow out the recognized rules of civilized warfare. Hospitals near the fighting front I understand are no longer lighted up at night so that the Red Cross may be seen by any passing aviator. It used to be the habit, but nowadays seems only to invite attack. They have cast all decency aside, and are ready to do any savage act, if only they can injure their foes."

"That shows how, deep down in their hearts, they know they are bound to get a good licking," declared Elmer, stoutly. "It's a spirit of recklessness that animates them now in most of their fighting. Lost to all sense of shame they act like mad dogs. But you had better go back to the hut, Miss Nellie. This night air is pretty cool, even if it is the beginning of June."

"Thank you for helping me to see a spectacle I shall never forget; and also for making that promise," she was saying as she left him. "Of course I understand there's a big chance nothing may ever come out of it, but somehow I seem to feel better after telling you."

"And I'll never forget this night, believe me," he said, as he squeezed her hand, which Nellie quickly withdrew from his clasp; after which she darted into the opening of the underground Red Triangle hut, and vanished from his gaze.

The camp settled down to its customary calm, once the cause of all the excitement had disappeared.

One by one the American airplane pilots would drop back again to earth, though ready to ascend again at the first sign of a hostile

squadron. But apparently the Huns might have decided that they had had quite enough of Yankee preparedness, for one night at least, since there was no further alarm from the sky.

So another dawn found them.

Every marine knew that the coming of this day took them closer to the great test that was brooding. It was generally understood that the Germans were gathering a vast force with which to assail the portion of the line held by the Americans. The attack was apt to break out at any day now. It could not come too soon to please those impatient marines under General Bartlett, to whom fighting was as natural as to an Irishman at the county fair in old Donnybrook.

Every precaution had been taken to strengthen their position, and as the days crept along their defences were added to wherever possible, in anticipation of the avalanche that was about to descend upon them.

If the French could not withstand the swoop of the German army how then were these youngsters from over-seas to hold the mighty steam-roller in check? Up to then they had not participated in any big affair, and there would be much for them to learn before

they could be deemed modern fighting men—those who were left alive after weeks of savage battling.

Elmer went about his ordinary duties with a new vim on that morning. Somehow the recollection of all that had happened during the preceding night cheered him considerably. He felt that he had the inside track with regard to Nellie's company; since she had taken him into her confidence, and made him her champion.

Now and then his thoughts turned to Amos Flagg, and again he found himself wondering what the other's true mission could have been to take him out there in those woods where danger lurked in the shape of raiding German patrols, anxious to capture the first American so as to crow over the feat.

Couriers were continually coming to and departing from Headquarters, as though the local American commander were keeping in close touch with other points on the French and Yank line. No doubt spies too were fetching in valuable news, while observers and photographers connected with the air service added to the general stock of information by pass-

ing well over Hindenburg's lines, to capture any movements that might be in progress.

There was a feeling of impending activities in the very air. The boys drank it in with every breath they drew. Through the camps it went from mouth to mouth as if by magic. Every fellow had an air of eager expectancy about him that was simply contagious. No one knew anything for certain, but it just seemed to be on the bills as it were that they were about due for action, that was all. And strange to say, they all believed in the "high sign," even to exchanging congratulations over the glorious prospect ahead. Let old Hindenburg come, and be hanged to him!

It was toward the middle of that same afternoon that Elmer Ketcham had a little shock. He was passing from one dugout to another, to carry a message to a pal who was a bit under the weather, though not in the hospital, when it happened.

Suddenly he came to a sudden stand-still, and stared. Could he believe his eyes? He rubbed them furiously, but when he looked again the same figure appeared before him, a tall figure for a Frenchman, well groomed in a uniform that would designate him a captain



of artillery, and of course wearing one of those absurd little brush-like mustaches that were copied by many American officers going abroad, just to be "in the swim."

"It's certainly Antoine, or his double, as sure as Fate!" Elmer was telling himself.

He temporarily at least forgot all about the comrade he had meant to see and condole with. What could have brought Antoine Maillard to the camp of the marines; and why should he be wearing a captain's uniform? When last they met some months back, in Paris, he had been in sober "cit's" garb, and at the time hinted about being a secret agent of the French Government, not a military official.

The old suspicions arose again.

"If, as I strongly suspected at the time, the fellow has sold himself for German gold," Elmer went on to say to himself, "what better place for him to visit than the front where American marines are holding forth? It is with regard to our corps the Hun Headquarters is troubled. They can't find out our numbers, or what condition of efficiency we're in. See him sauntering about as big as life; and looking to right and left all the time as if nothing worth while could escape those quick eyes

of his. He's evidently got a wonderful memory, and later on can draw on it for anything he needs to write out in code for transmitting to the other side. All of which may be so in case he *is* a spy!"

Elmer's interest grew by leaps and bounds.

He kept watching the other, though not appearing to do so, for he did not wish to awaken such a thing as suspicion in Antoine's breast. If he were what Elmer began to believe more than ever it would make matters doubly hard to put him on his guard by convincing him his loyalty was doubted.

"He's certainly taking everything in as he moves about," Elmer continued saying, uneasily. "What boldness and audacity he shows in coming here; but then no doubt he's fortified with all sorts of bogus passports signed perhaps by Marshal Foch himself, or it may be Joffre, or Premier Clemenceau. I wonder would he remember me; and could it be possible he knows Nell is here on this sector; yes, and carrying the secret of his great aunt's hidden treasure-trove?"

The thought made Elmer uneasy. After watching the other for a while longer, and even following him at a little distance, he saw how

easily he passed the sentries as though he carried the magic word.

"He'll soon get beyond my precinct, and where I can't follow him so easily, so if I'm going to show myself I'd better be doing that same now," with which words Elmer started out to walk past, and almost under the nose of the natty looking French artillery captain.

Sure enough he heard the other give a sudden exclamation. Then came a hail.

"*Mon ami!* Who is this I see but my acquaintance of the Paris boulevard, M'sieu Ketcham? I am delighted to run across you once more, my friend. Permit me to offer you my hand to prove it."

At the same time Antoine touched his lips with the forefinger of his other hand. The action implied caution, silence in fact. Apparently he meant to say nothing in explanation of his conduct as they stood close together, where no listener might overhear his communication, and bring about trouble.

So Elmer accepted the offered hand, though he felt a sort of queer chill upon finding the other's fingers so cold. It reminded Elmer of times when as a boy he had held a snake, or

perhaps a frog in his clutch; there seemed to be something so cold-blooded about it.

“I beg of you to say nothing about having met me before, my friend,” remarked the other, smoothly. “Today you see me as a captain of artillery; tomorrow it may be I shall visit Marshal Foch as a colonel of infantry; and the next day appear in yet another quarter as a civilian, a courier from the French Chamber, bearing an important message to the front from President Poincare. It is all in a day’s work, you see, my friend. We members of the Secret Service must be ready to obey the call of duty, and serve our country as occasion demands. You comprehend, *mon ami*, of course?”

Elmer nodded his head as though he did not entertain the slightest doubt in the wide world. Nevertheless that haunting suspicion would not leave his mind. He also determined that if Antoine were playing a double rôle, and serving the enemy while pretending to work in the interests of France, then indeed he must be the smartest spy in the entire bunch.

His opportunities for learning important things seemed unlimited while thus trusted by high officials; if only he had the means for

transmitting them to the military authorities on the other side whose precious and unlimited supply of gold had tempted him to play his country false.

So Elmer determined that he too would act a part. Of course he could not expect that the fortunes of war would favor him with a chance to tear the mask from the face of the other, did Antoine prove to be the type of renegade he suspected; but no harm could come of acting as if unsuspecting.

Now that he looked again upon the rather handsome face of the young Frenchman he believed he could trace a certain family resemblance to Nell Gwynne; although there was a sinister expression to be detected by sharp eyes in connection with Antoine's features that was entirely lacking in the case of the sweet girl of the Red Triangle. But Antoine was speaking again.

"I am most astonished to discover what you Americans have been doing here on the Chauteau Thierry front. It is simply amazing, I declare. Pity the foolish Boche when he strikes at your lines. He is sure to go back with a headache. And after that he will know what sort of fighting man the Yank he is.

What would I not give for the privilege of staying here at this very spot, and witnessing the debacle. It will be superb, magnifique! Ah! what a wonderful people you Americans are; and what does not poor bleeding France, and Belgium too, owe you? We can repay the great debt never, I am afraid, M'sieu Ketcham."

He spoke as might the most sincere and devoted lover of France. It was hard for Elmer to believe that one who used such fair words could hide his real feelings of treachery deep down in a black heart. But the more he came in contact with Antoine the stronger grew his aversion.

It had also been fanned into something like a flame by what few words Nellie used in speaking of her French cousin. Somehow these had great weight with Elmer. As a lad Antoine had been scheming, clever, and not altogether dependable; and was there not an old saying to the effect that "as the twig's inclined the tree is bent?" Usually the boy is the shadow of the coming man. And likely Antoine drifted quite naturally into his present vocation, whatever it might really be, for good or evil toward France.



As before the other plied many questions, all the while uttering fulsome praises for the Americans. Elmer believed these were only spoken to lull his suspicions to rest, and that underneath the words there lay biting sarcasm. He could see where many fine phrases might be turned another way, and show a caustic spirit.

After a bit Elmer excused himself.

"I was on my way to see a comrade who is not exactly well, and who will be expecting me," he ventured to say to explain his seeming rudeness in breaking away when the other seemed so anxious to hold him there in conversation.

He had of course not mentioned a word about Nellie Gwynne, for various reasons. But then it might be possible Antoine was well aware of the fact that his pretty American cousin was employed in the Red Triangle hut near by; and that this knowledge was one reason to explain his presence there in the marine camp back of the American front.

So they parted, with considerable show of politeness on the part of the young Frenchman. Looking back after he had gone a dozen paces Elmer saw something that caused him to stop

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short and stare, while a queer feeling tugged at his heart.

Nell Gwynne had just issued from the underground hut of the Y.M.C.A., bearing a small basket in her hand, and her course would take her face to face with the sauntering Antoine!

## CHAPTER VII.

## ON THE TRACK.

ELMER watched to see what happened. He found himself intensely interested, for somehow the fortunes of Nell Gwynne concerned him considerably. Had he not accepted the trust she offered, and was he not enlisted in a singular quest for the little girl's inheritance, though with but small chances of ever recovering it for her?

So he saw Nell suddenly come to a stop. She had discovered this figure in the garb of a French artillery captain coming along with somewhat of a swagger. Just then Antoine was attracted toward the girl. Doubtless the sight of such a winsome figure and face must have drawn his attention, especially at the front, where as a rule women were a rarity, and pretty ones even scarcer.

Then he started toward Nellie. He had undoubtedly recognized her, Elmer realized, though this did not explain whether Antoine knew of her being in the vicinity or not.

Now he was bending over, cap in hand, and saying something. Elmer saw him hold out his hand as if in cousinly greeting. He was glad it went no further, though what business that was of his he might not have been able to explain, so long as the Y.M.C.A. girl did not object.

Nellie's hesitation was brief. She must have concluded that she had no right to cut a relation dead, especially since there was really no definite proof of his having tried to come between the old great aunt and herself.

Now they were talking, the man with unusual vehemence, and Nellie showing more or less reluctance, as if loth to stand there much longer. Elmer noted these facts with growing satisfaction.

"She did not like him as a boy," he was muttering to himself, "and she cares still less for Cousin Antoine as a young man. There's something about him that makes her suspicious. But as for him, it's plain to be seen he thinks Nell about the sweetest thing going. Not that I can blame him much for that, either. But if he expects to hang around, and bother her, just because he happens to be her

cousin, I guess now he has another think coming, that's flat."

Just then the girl said something quickly, and then left the bowing and scraping Frenchman standing there. How he looked after her retreating figure in its trim suit of khaki. He was nodding his head too as if some sudden pleasant thought had flashed upon him.

That somehow made Elmer grit his teeth as a spasm of alarm shot through his heart. He believed he could divine the thought that had caused Antoine such decided pleasure.

"You're all wrong there, my friend," Elmer was muttering, almost savagely, as he continued to watch the other. "That fine girl isn't meant for you, or any one of your kind. Better pay strict attention to your business, which just at present I rather imagine concerns the doings of Uncle Sammy's Marine Corps, and its readiness to give a tough battle to the Kaiser's brigades."

Antoine was now stalking slowly along, pulling reflectively at his tiny black mustache. For a brief time further Elmer continued to keep an eye on him, and as he saw several things to add to his suspicion a sudden resolution seized him.

“That’s just what I might do,” he told himself. “The captain being a particular friend of mine will be more or less interested in my yarn. He may not take a great deal of stock in the spy part of it; but then no harm could come of my getting a pass to move around freely for a while. Then I can follow M’sieu Antoine, go where he chooses. I’ll do it!”

He felt confident of being able to find the wandering French captain again at some time in the near future. Just then the Americans were herded pretty much by themselves, for it was intended that they should have a good try-out when the onslaught came, to show what they could do against picked German soldiers, and the famous “shock” troops, trained to smash through at any cost. On this account the presence of a French uniform could be easily discovered by a few judicious inquiries.

Presently, then, Elmer was in the presence of Captain Fuller, an officer who had been long with the marines, and seen active service in many quarters of the globe where these valiant soldiers of the sea may have been called upon for sudden emergencies, and to uphold the traditions of the corps for being the “first to fight, the last to retreat.”



"Captain, I'm going to ask a great favor of you," he went on to say, after the proper salute had been exchanged, and the officer, his eyes kindling with pleasure, for he was quite fond of Elmer, had asked what brought the sergeant to his dugout.

"If it's any reasonable thing that I can grant, I'll try to accommodate you, Sergeant Ketcham," said the other, and then adding: "but don't ask a leave, even of a day; for there's danger of the shock striking us at any hour."

"Wild horses couldn't drag me away from here right now, Captain," affirmed Elmer, truthfully. "I wouldn't miss what's coming for anything. But could you allow me a pass that would let me go where I willed along our line here, back of the front, say for a couple of hours or so?"

The other looked at him keenly.

"Tell me your reason for such a request, Sergeant," he said, tersely; "and I'll see what I think of it."

Accordingly Elmer started in. He did not linger too long, though endeavoring to narrate all the really salient points, so that the captain might be able to grasp the facts. Of course

Nellie had to figure in the story, because of being Antoine's cousin, and Elmer wished to tell how the other had shown signs of unruliness, even as a lad years back.

When he had finally arrived at the point where he saw the seeming captain of artillery sauntering along once more, his keen eyes ever on the alert to note what lay around him, the officer nodded his head.

"I'll give you the pass, Sergeant Ketcham, because I know you are discreet, and can be trusted not to commit any breach of civility that might get us into trouble with our French allies. Only be sure you're right before you attempt such a thing as arresting that man. I mean don't allow any personal feeling to enter into the matter."

Elmer flushed a little. He realized that Captain Fuller, even though an old bachelor himself, could read the signs of his interest in the pretty worker at the Y.M.C.A. canteen. But really there was nothing he need be ashamed of in such an interest; nor did he believe Captain Fuller blamed him. Possibly he himself had noted what a demure little girl Nellie Gwynne seemed to be.

"I understand, Captain," he said, simply,

"and I assure you I will be cautious in what I do. And I shall only remember that it is all for the good of the service, sir."

"For Old Glory, yes," and the officer cast a swift though fond glance toward a miniature flag which he had draped on the mud wall of his humble quarters, as though the one dominating thought in his mind was that of serving his country.

A short time later and the pass was placed in Elmer's hand. He again saluted and departed, knowing that the captain, being a man of few words himself, was not fond of being thanked when in the course of duty he did a favor.

"Now to find Antoine again," Elmer was telling himself, as he hastened in the direction where he had last glimpsed the other.

For a while his search seemed futile. He finally found it necessary to ask an occasional question in a cautious way. This finally put him on the track, and in the end he discovered the object of his concern.

"Still soaking in information, it seems," Elmer muttered on discovering that Antoine continued to saunter as the whim urged him,

looking to the right and to the left, as if deeply interested in all that he saw.

Of course the sergeant was too shrewd to draw close enough for the other to notice him in case he suddenly turned around, as he was apt to do at almost any time. Fortunately Elmer had had more or less experience at this sort of thing, having served his time in the ranks of the Boy Scouts, and moreover reaching an exalted position in the line of woodcraft.

Besides, like Amos Flagg, he had always been a devoted hunter and fisherman, and in a camping trip to the wilds of Maine had learned from a woods guide just how to proceed when stalking a moose or deer.

This knowledge came in pretty pat when the object he followed was a man. Should Antoine look around he did not mean the other should pay any particular attention to him, among all the other marines in sight along this front; nor would he be given much of a chance to glimpse his face, if Elmer could help it.

So the game went on, Antoine keeping up his saunter, and Elmer remaining just so far in the rear. As he went on the sergeant found it necessary to show his pass a number of

times, for even a non-com would not be allowed to wander far from his command at such an important time.

Antoine also was prepared in like manner. Evidently he had found some means for influencing a proper official to arm him with a pass, which served him on every necessary occasion. He carried out the part of an interested French officer, seeing for himself the vast preparations made by the newly-arrived Yanks for giving Fritz a hot reception when he chose to come along.

Finally Elmer believed there was some sort of a crisis coming. He judged this by the fact that gradually Antoine was working out of the camp proper, and heading as if to plunge into the country to the south.

"Huh! picked up all the information he needs," Elmer assured himself, on noticing this fact, "and means to skip out. Next job for Antoine, provided he is the kind of slippery viper I suspect, will be to find a way to get his news across to his employers with the Crown Prince. I'm wondering how he means to do that very thing; and by the same token I mean to find out, or know the reason why."

When Elmer Ketcham had set that stub-

born mind of his on anything he usually accomplished his purpose; at least the record of his failures was not a long one. And realizing that his difficulties were now apt to increase he dropped a little further in the rear.

All that was necessary was for him to be able to keep the other in sight; and so camouflage his own person that by standing stock still, in case the suspect turned his head, he would not be noticed. That was another trick Elmer had picked up in the Maine woods. A clever stalker of game by keeping to leeward of a feeding deer may advance slowly, ready to become motionless the instant he notices the animal give a whisk of its short tail, which it invariably does when about to lift its head to look cautiously around. And seeing what looks only like a stump it is likely to resume feeding again, allowing of a still further advance on the part of the sportsman or woods guide, until within easy gunshot.

More time went by.

They had now left the marine camp in the lurch and were well in the country to the south. Signs of warfare could be seen here and there—shell-holes, burned cottages or outbuildings; trees killed by destructive gunfire; broken-



down motor trucks along the roadside; sometimes with a dismantled caisson with its wheels splintered, but invariably emptied of its contents. These sights were no longer a novelty to Elmer, and he gave them scant attention. His whole thought was to keep on the track of the mysterious Antoine, and learn what the other really might prove to be.

His suspicions were mounting further and further.

The actions of the pretended captain of artillery went to make them grow apace, for he often glanced back now, and once or twice when apparently hearing some sign of coming troops along the road darted in among the trees, to remain hidden until they went by.

Once Elmer had to wait patiently while the other kept writing something or other. It might be his report to superior officers, by whose orders he had visited the American front; then again there was a chance that he might be jotting down certain important facts in cipher for conveying to the enemy.

Of the two Elmer was inclined to put more faith in that latter explanation. In fact he no longer experienced the least doubt concerning

the duplicity of Antoine Maillard. Still, the warning of his captain lingered in his ears; he must get positive facts, and not depend on mere suspicions.

Still the other went on.

They no longer followed the main road, but had branched off along a side one that looked as though but little used in these latter days. Antoine hurried now, almost running in fact, as though eager to get busy in some unknown way. And of course Elmer's curiosity was being aroused to fever heat, as all sorts of vague ideas began to take shape in his brain.

Just how the other expected to get his information to the Huns was a problem he could not solve; unless it turned out that he had a rendezvous where some daring Teuton aviator waited for him. This came to Elmer very much like an inspiration, and he fancied he might be hitting pretty close to the truth. Still it could not be long now before he learned the facts in the case.

Even as he told himself this Elmer discovered that they were approaching what seemed to be the remains of a partly ruined peasant's cottage, perhaps that of a farmer on a small

scale. And Antoine was making straight toward this place as though it might turn out to be the goal for which he had been heading ever since quitting the camp of the American marines.

## CHAPTER VIII.

BY PIGEON POST

AT least the cottage, though half wrecked, was not without a tenant, for Elmer heard Antoine give a whistle, and almost immediately a form appeared in the doorway.

So far as appearances went the man might pass for an humble French peasant, since he wore a belted dirty blue smock, and had on wooden sabots; while his black hair looked particularly frowsy. But Elmer more than suspected he too might turn out to be a second clever Hun spy, possibly a native of Lorraine, who could speak French as one to the manner born.

His style of greeting the pretended captain endorsed this theory; for it was that of an equal rather than an inferior. Both men vanished inside the cottage, and the door was shut.

Elmer managed to approach closer by taking advantage of certain outbuildings of a dilapidated nature. From behind one of these

he could obtain a more leisurely survey of the place.

Undoubtedly some sort of spirited action must have taken place in this particular sector, for the side of the cottage nearest him seemed to be well peppered by shrapnel, or rifle bullets. And that jagged end had undoubtedly been torn away by some sort of shell.

It was easy to conjecture how some hotly pressed party, on one side or the other, may have sought shelter in this isolated cottage. The opposing troops must have pressed the siege vigorously; and when a gun came along brought it into play, thus compelling the defenders to show the white flag of surrender. Yes, it had a history, the ruined cottage, that would cling to it for many years to come, should the owner ever rebuild his humble home.

What could the two inside be doing, he wondered?

Just then a singular sound came to his ears that gave him a curious thrill, as he recognized it, and realized what possibilities it presented.

What he heard had been the coo of a pig-

eon! It came from the cottage of a certainty, in the bargain, and not out of the shack of a stable back of which he was then crouching.

Through his mind flashed certain things which he chanced to know about in connection with homing pigeons, and to what a great extent they were being utilized on both sides, to carry messages from exposed positions along the front, where a human courier could hardly expect to show himself without being shot to pieces.

Then often those who went forth in airplanes to spy out the secrets of the enemy would carry one or more of the birds along, and loose them with important messages at stated intervals. The intelligent birds would fly directly back to their coop, and the aviator could go on with his work, thus avoiding a tedious return trip.

More than this Elmer understood that the birds were used by spies to send over records in cipher of the important information they had acquired. In fact orders had gone out to try and kill any pigeon seen winging its way into the north, as the chances were it might be a feathered messenger bearing tidings of great import.



"As plain as the nose on my face," he assured himself, as he continued to hear the drumming of the male pigeon strutting about in front of his mate. "And this isn't the first time either that Antoine has sent news across by pigeon post."

He was disturbed by the thought that it would possibly be a difficult matter for him to act so as to prevent the dispatch from being safely transmitted by the winged messenger. True, he had his rifle along with him, having been wise enough to secure that weapon before starting forth on his quest; but although a fairly good marksman Elmer hardly believed himself capable of hitting a fast-flying pigeon with a *bullet*; had it been a shotgun his chances must have been vastly improved.

Somehow he now began to be impressed with the fact that it was up to him to get close to the cottage, and learn what was going on within. He looked again, and found reason to believe such a manoeuvre could be readily carried out, especially since the two men did not seem to harbor any suspicion that they were under surveillance.

Accordingly he started to accomplish this feat. After all it proved to be an easy propo-

sition. Down on hands and knees he went, and commenced creeping along, always taking pains to keep some object between himself and the building.

Once he found it necessary to actually lie flat, and wriggle along inches at a time, much after the fashion of a snake; but the difficult place was passed, and in due time he reached the battered wall of the old cottage.

It had suffered severely when that last shell tore off one end, so that cracks could be seen running for yards in a diagonal direction. Elmer clapped his eye to the most promising of these, and although at first he could not see much, his eyes having become accustomed to the bright sunlight, presently things began to grow clearer, and he made out the figure of Antoine.

He sat on a wooden stool by a rude table. Evidently he had been writing again, for he was compressing a thin wedge of paper into the smallest possible scroll, almost like a toothpick. Even as Elmer glued his eyes on him Antoine called out; and though he spoke in French the other could understand about what he said to be:

“I am ready, my friend; there is much

need of haste. Fetch me Kaiser, our first prize bird!"

Why, they even had the audacity to name their homing birds after German men in high positions! Surely no further evidence need be required than this, Elmer told himself.

He saw the other man come down a ladder. In his hand he was carrying a slate-colored pigeon, evidently the premium bird of the flock. The cooing went on above as though there were a number of other messengers awaiting their turn to serve the cause of the Fatherland, and when released fly to their coop somewhere back of the fighting front.

Now Antoine was fixing the slip of twisted paper to the bird, using a waterproof cartridge made of celluloid perhaps, in which to enclose it. Elmer had to think fast if he meant to balk the designs of this precious pair. Once that swift bird were set free and it was not likely that anything he could do would prevent its carrying the important news to the ones for whom it was intended.

So after all it seemed more necessary that he should destroy the communication than arrest the conspirators; and it was toward this end that Elmer bent all his energies.

Again he remembered about his gun.

At that short distance, only a dozen feet in fact, he could make sure of hitting the bird, given a fair opportunity to shoot. The crack was wide enough for him to suddenly push the barrel forward, and accomplish his intention before either of the men could interfere.

So Elmer started operations.

By rare good luck it happened that both of them had their backs toward him, so he was thus able to do what he had in view. He calculated there would be something of a surprise in store for Antoine before many more minutes had sped along. Elmer could hardly keep from chuckling at the thought of undoing all the evil work of the clever spy, in this fashion.

Now Antoine had accomplished his job. The tiny waterproof receptacle had been ingeniously fastened to the bird in such a way that it could not in the least interfere with its flying.

Antoine seemed to be rather proud of what he had done. At least there was a smile as of triumph on his sallow face when he gently placed Kaiser on the deal table, after petting the favorite pigeon briefly, and leaned back

on his stool to contemplate the ready messenger.

He was saying something to his companion. Elmer did not catch its import, but could easily surmise that it must be along the line of asking whether there was anything else to be attended to before they took the homer without, and cast him up in the air.

The bird seemed quite tame. It made no effort to get away, but actually commenced to preen its feathers while standing on the table in plain sight of the one who peered through that wide crack.

Elmer felt a twinge of regret. He did dislike such a job as murdering a splendid little creature which was not to blame for being raised to play a part in a spy game. In fact Elmer had just such birds of his own at home, and had always taken the keenest interest in their work. But there was no other way. That important message must not be allowed to go forward, if anything he could do might prevent it.

He dared not wait longer, for fear the man might reach out again and once more lay hands on Kaiser.

So Elmer grimly set his teeth, made sure of

his aim, and pressed the trigger. The explosion that followed sounded doubly loud on account of the conditions. Antoine, taken entirely by surprise, fell over in a heap, possibly thinking he himself had been the intended target. As for the wretched pigeon, a puff of feathers seemed to tell what its fate had been, for the discharge of the gun must have blown it across the small room in a huddled heap.

Elmer withdrew his gun.

He did not turn and run away, satisfied with having destroyed the message. That might have been the safer way, but Elmer had considered all the chances; and he could not forget that there were still other feathered messengers in the rude loft above; and that given time Antoine would easily be able to duplicate the dispatch that had been apparently destroyed. Possibly he might even retrieve the little capsule of celluloid from the fragments of the slain pigeon, Elmer realized.

So he had made up his mind that his duty was not yet completed. If only he could make a prisoner of one or both spies what honor might not be his—even a commission would not be too high a reward to expect for having



possibly saved the Yanks from overwhelming disaster when the anticipated assault came.

He hastened to change his position. Once the two spies recovered from their recent shock, and very likely their first and consuming thought would be to try and either capture or kill the one who had interfered with the successful carrying out of their plans.

Elmer hurried around to where he might stand guard over the exit. If they ventured to come out he would have them where he could hold the whip-hand over the pair.

All was deathly silent within the old cottage now. Even the pigeons, alarmed by that crash, had ceased their wooing. He wondered what Antoine and his comrade could be doing. Were there any other means for reaching the open air? Elmer began to wonder whether he had been wise after all in acting as he did; but it was too late now to change his tactics. If he attempted to move away surely they must see him, and such a tempting target would be certain to provoke a warm volley from their firearms.

It was not an easy thing to watch the doorway, and at the same time try to guard against a surprise from the rear. Perhaps he would

have been wiser to have shot one of the men, just so as to wound him, and thus cause them to surrender. He might have called out, telling them the house was surrounded and that half a dozen rifles covered them, so at the first sign of treachery they would be shot down like dogs.

Too bad the idea had not come to him earlier. Elmer chided himself for not being more prompt with his thoughts. But he was too far along to alter his plan of campaign, and must make the most of a bad bargain. Get those fellows he would if only given half a chance, even though he had to burn the cottage to the ground, with its feathered inmates as well.

Something fell inside the place, making quite a loud noise. It may have been an accident, caused by a clumsy movement; then again he strongly suspected there was a method about the sound; as though a crafty schemer had thrown some object down just to convince the one without that he and his comrade were still inside.

That would mean they had a way of getting out of which he was himself ignorant. It was intended to chain his attention on the reg-

ular exit while possibly the precious pair came creeping up behind him.

With his nerves on edge Elmer crouched there and waited, every sense on the alert. Several times he caught the slightest of sounds. It may only have been a movement on the part of the pigeons in the loft, for he heard them cooing again. His own imagination had magnified the soft murmur, and made it appear threatening.

How would it do for him to apply a match, and in this way force the pair to vacate the premises, when he could hold them up with his gun, and thus walk them into camp? Sufficient evidence of their treacherous work could be found in the pigeon loft. If any more were needed the celluloid cylinder with its cipher contents attached to the dear Kaiser, would afford it, could they be rescued in time from the flames.

The idea, though a bit far-fetched at first, was rapidly taking a grip on Elmer, when something occurred that put it out of his mind completely, and instead caused him to consider his own personal safety.

## CHAPTER IX.

## ANOTHER SURPRISE.

CRACK!"

The sudden and spiteful report of an automatic sounded off to one side. Elmer could almost feel the wind of the leaden missile as it brushed his cheek, and imbedded itself in the mud that served as plaster between the stones of which the abandoned farmhouse was built.

One hasty look he cast in the direction from whence the missile had apparently come; this showed him a curl of smoke rising from a fringe of bushes; and it went without saying that these sheltered the unseen marksman.

Of course he guessed how matters stood. The men, or one of them at least, must have escaped from the cottage by way of another exit, perhaps a break in the wall on the far side, and where he had not as yet been. It was all very plain, and also the significant fact that they seemed disposed to linger, and take some-

thing in the way of revenge for having their plans spoiled.

Elmer acted from impulse. At any rate it was no time for figuring things out, and choosing which course he would best like to pursue.

With a hasty leap he reached the near-by doorway. Through this he plunged in mad haste, for the fellow in the bushes had opened fire again, and the bullets were singing about his head like angry hornets.

Fortune favored him in so far at least as allowing him to gain the interior of the cottage without being more than "singed" by one of the patches of flying lead. It nipped his left arm in passing, just drawing blood, and making a respectable hole through the sleeve, of which he might yet be proud, as proof that he had finally shed his first drop of blood in the great cause.

Well, Elmer had to laugh at the way things had changed. It was turning the tables with a vengeance. One minute he stood guard without, while the precious pair of plotters were supposed to be cooped up in the cottage; the next and it was his turn to occupy the interior of the ramshackle building, while Antoine and

his pal held him a prisoner by virtue of their firearms.

The very first thing Elmer did was to dive for the spot where that fragment of a once proud and clever Kaiser lay. This he snatched up, and finding that the little celluloid container seemed to still be intact, he hastily thrust bird and message into his coat pocket. Thus fortified with sufficient evidence to prove his story as founded on absolute truth, in case it were ever questioned, Elmer felt a hundred per cent better.

But that was not going to be the end of his little adventure, it seemed. Antoine had the appearance of a hard loser. He would never be content to run away, now that he had found out it was only one U. S. marine who had wrought all that damage to his nicely arranged plans.

“Wonder if he recognized me when he fired that first shot?” was what Elmer was asking himself, even while prowling around so as to find a place that might afford him safe shelter. for the memory of those broad cracks in the wall made him a bit uneasy regarding his safety.

He waited to see what would happen.



At least Antoine would be barred from getting a second pigeon messenger, since he dared not enter the cottage while uncertain regarding the location of the man wearing the blue marine uniform, who must be somewhere within. That caused Elmer further satisfaction, for little things sometimes loom large in one's calculations, especially when they affect the ultimate result aimed at.

Could that be the two men talking outside? The pigeons had again commenced to coo and make other sounds, so it was more or less difficult to decide. But he felt confident that Antoine would hang around. If the one who had discovered his secret were not prevented from proclaiming his true character, his further usefulness as a German spy would be rendered null and void. And Antoine was one of the kind to give up grudgingly.

What could they be thinking of doing? Snuggled up against a wall Elmer had no way of finding out, for there seemed to be no convenient crack handy, and it was too risky to think of creeping over to an opening. The minutes dragged along, and seemed shod with lead, so tedious did they appear.

He held his gun ready for business in case

they came upon him; and this time no little qualm would keep him from using it to advantage, since his own life was now in the balance. Surely they must have decided to go away while the opportunity remained, or he would have heard some sound to betray their presence.

What was that he found himself sniffing? Smoke! He suddenly remembered what had passed through his own mind when wondering how he could pen the pair up, and force a surrender. Apparently, then, there were others who could have original ideas of their own. How would he like it, now the shoe was on the other foot?

Yes, there could be no mistake, for the air had begun to grow pungent with the odor of burning wood. He recollected that the part of the cottage smashed by the shell had lain a mass of ruins, with considerable splinters of wood visible, and offering a fine field for firing operations, were one so inclined.

It lay just to windward, too, more the pity, so that every bit of the acrid smoke was bound to be wafted directly toward his place of concealment. Already his eyes began to smart, perhaps partly in anticipation of what was

coming, and an altogether irresistible inclination to sneeze seized him in its grip.

If the two men heard that trio of loud outbursts how they must have exchanged looks of mutual congratulation, since it offered abundant proof that their "medicine" was working well.

Elmer no longer crouched close to the wall. Indeed, the place was already so saturated with smoke that there seemed no necessity for trying to screen himself. No one could get close up to peer through and see him; the smoke rendered that an utter impossibility.

Must he stay there and smother? What sort of a chance would he have should he suddenly dash out, and make a bee line for shelter in the neighboring woods? He had not the slightest doubt but that one of his enemies guarded each exit, ready to greet his coming with a deadly bullet. His own eyes would be so blurred on account of the smoke that he could not possibly see to aim in time to do himself any good.

He got down on his knees, because the air seemed somewhat fresher there. So he crawled over to the exit, hoping enough fresh air might be coming in to afford him some

benefit; but this proved to be a delusion. The current of wind was forcing all the smoke that way, and it eddied around the exit in a manner that was most exasperating.

Certainly Elmer did not relish the idea of being "cured" as though he were a ham hung up in a farmer's smoke-house. It was his eyes and lungs that gave him the most cause for distress. He coughed again and again, and had to keep his eyes shut half of the time, because of the pain that assailed them. Besides this they were shedding tears copiously; just as they used to when he was set by his mother at the task of peeling onions, after begging for a "mess of the same fried," one of his favorite boyish dishes.

"I can't stand this much longer," he kept saying, yet hesitated about staggering out of the door and meeting with what might be certain death at the hands of the desperate spies.

Had he his normal faculties just then doubtless Elmer would have decided to take all chances, and make the dash; but unable to see properly he knew he could never dodge the bullets that would be sent at close range.

It was a desperate situation.

The young marine had been longing for

action to take away some of the stagnation which had settled down upon the camp; but just then a little of that same serenity of mind would have been most welcome. Plainly there can be too much of a good thing; and he was getting more than his share right then.

Suddenly he heard a shout. It startled him so that he half raised his gun under the impression that his foes were growing tired of waiting, and meant to come in after him.

The crackling of the flames came to his ears, but there was no movement near him. As he strained his ears to catch some sound he again heard shouts, but they seemed further away. What thrilled Elmer was another thing, however; he fancied those were genuine *Yankee yells* that came floating in through the open door of the cottage! That significant fact opened up all sorts of pleasant possibilities to his mind.

What, more shots, even a little volley of them! Surely something not down on the bills of the play must be going on outside. At any rate, even though all this might only be a clever trick to draw him out, he certainly could not stand that smoky interior a second longer.

Staggering like a drunken man he found

the exit, and passed through. Why, even after he actually felt the fresh air fan his cheeks he could not see, so blinded by the wood smoke had he become; and Elmer found himself staggering along like a drunken man.

He was dimly conscious of the hasty approach of some person, whose form he could just dimly make out. Whether friend or foe he could not tell, nor did he particularly care just at the moment. Then to his astonishment he heard his name called, in a tone that combined surprise with pleasure.

"Elmer, is it you we've run across, here in the burning mess, and with those two Huns trying to roast you alive? Say, I guess I'm right glad I happened along just in time. But it'll break my heart if that precious pair of spies get away, after all my hard work!"

Then Elmer knew that another miracle had been wrought. It seemed as though Fortune had tried very hard to bring about a return of the favor he had been allowed to show toward an old comrade. Yes, it was Amos Flagg again, and those must be some of his pals who were chasing after Antoine and his fleeing companion.

Something significant about the words



Amos let fall appealed to Elmer. He seized upon the hand he felt grip his, and squeezed it convulsively. Already his eyes seemed to pain him less as the fresh air soothed the tortured balls. He could even distinguish the well-remembered face of Amos close to him, a pair of pitying eyes peering anxiously into his own.

"See here, were you after that couple of Hun spies, Amos?" cried Elmer, almost forgetting his disconsolate condition in the excitement of the moment. "Was that your secret business the other day, when you said you couldn't explain why you were mousing around out there?"

"Guess I'll have to own up, Elmer," admitted the other, with a short laugh, "seeing that you appear to know all about the skunks; and I find you here all by yourself fighting the pair of them single-handed. Yes, I was sent out to try and corral a clever spy, whose operations were giving the general staff heaps of bother. But unless one of my two men manage to knock him over I'm afraid he'll get away clear, and carry his information along with him."

With that Elmer suddenly came to life as it were.

"Let's start after the others, and see if we can't overhaul 'em!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "We were both known as sprinters in the school meets, and now's the chance to prove what we can do at running."

"But could you stand a gruelling like that, Elmer, after what you've passed through?" objected Amos, though he himself looked as if ready to start off.

"A heap better already, and bound to improve with each jump," snapped the other, eagerly.

"And the cottage here, ought we let it go on burning?" added Amos.

"Little it matters," came the immediate reply. "Pretty much a wreck already. Nothing alive inside but a few pigeons, and they'll have to cook. Come on, Amos, let's overhaul that Antoine and his pal!"

With that Elmer shot away. He did not neglect to carry his gun along, luckily enough, as it afterwards turned out. Amos was close at his heels, and both ran easily, though with increasing speed.

Any one acquainted with athletic matters could see that these lads were well versed in all the elements that accompany a successful

racer's activities. They did not make a furious splurge in the beginning, but meant to gradually work up to top-notch speed. Often the horse that is forced at the start comes in a bad loser; while the one held in until thoroughly warmed up with the work will display astounding swiftness on the home stretch.

They had no difficulty in knowing what course to pursue, even though there did not happen to be any one in sight at the time they started. Distant shouts floated back to their ears, as though the two companions of Amos might be trying to keep him informed of their whereabouts. Besides both young fellows were so accustomed to the woods that they could detect the track the others had made through the undergrowth.

As they progressed the sounds seemed to grow in volume. This announced that in all probability they were gradually drawing up on those in advance, owing partly to the fast speed they put out, and also their cleverness with regard to dodging obstacles in a woods, jumping over fallen logs, and even clearing bramble-patches by wonderful leaps.

Presently they glimpsed a heavily laboring figure just ahead of them.

## CHAPTER X.

## YANK AGAINST HUN.

AT last, there's one of the Huns!" burst from Amos, in a spirit of almost savage satisfaction.

"You're a whole lot too fast, Amos," came from the second runner. "That must be one of your men, for he's sure a marine!"

Thereupon Amos, taking another and more searching look, gave a grunt expressive of disgust.

"Guess you're right, old top," he admitted. "But they can't be so *very* far on ahead. Frazer isn't as good a sprinter as Dean. I hope Dan has got their number by this time. I'm expecting to hear his gun barking every second."

They soon overtook Frazer. He was gasping for breath, and undoubtedly pretty nearly "all in."

"Is Dean keeping up the rush, Sandy?" asked Amos, as with his comrade he slackened

his pace somewhat, so as to keep alongside the almost exhausted runner.

The marine nodded in assent.

"Going fine last I saw him—spies some distance ahead—runners every inch of 'em, believe me, corporal—I'm knocked out, seems like—never was much at this game—scrap-ping's my main hold."

"Take it easy, then, but keep following us up; we may need your help sooner or later. So-long, Sandy."

With that Amos again put fresh vim into his efforts, and forged ahead of the lumbering private. Of course Elmer kept alongside, for Nature had fashioned him to imitate a greyhound in the lightness and swiftness with which he could get over ground.

As they ran both lads kept a good lookout, and also managed to follow the plain tracks left by those they were chasing. Hope still sang an encouraging refrain, for they were young, and filled with enthusiasm, as well as the never-give-up spirit that animates the entire marine corps.

The woods seemed to be getting more open as they advanced. After all it was not an extensive forest like the famous Argonne, which

later on would mark the high-water mark of American endeavor and courage in France.

"Somebody running ahead there!" announced Elmer, who seemed to have extraordinary powers of vision.

"You're right, and it's Dean!" observed the other a few seconds later, when he, too, had glimpsed the moving figure.

By degrees they came up on the second private. He was a rather loose-jointed, lengthy chap whose long legs did seem to get over the ground with considerable dexterity, though he could hardly be said to be in the same class as either of the non-coms.

"Hello! there, Dean, we're coming like smoke!" called out Amos. "Keep moving, and we'll haul alongside."

Two minutes later they had overtaken the other, and Amos was able to ask a few questions. Short of wind as he was he wasted no time in useless talk but went straight at the heart of matters.

"They're still up yonder of course, Dean?"

"Sure thing, corporal," came the strained reply.

"Have you glimpsed them lately?"

"Yep—about three minutes back. Both



running like fun, and say, one held up a pistol like he meant to tell me what was goin' to happen if I kept agoin'."

"We must be drawing near the river," suggested Elmer.

"Why, that's a fact," echoed Amos. "Wonder how they mean to get across. If they have a boat we'll have to swim, or wade, I guess. But a dozen rivers won't stop me from keeping everlastingly after that crowd."

It was evident that they could outrun Dean, so presently Amos sprinted ahead.

"Keep a-coming, Dean; we may need you!" he called back over his shoulder.

"You bet I will, corporal," came the confident answer. "I'm game for a whole hour yet."

Leaving him behind the other pair shot forward. Again did they watch eagerly to catch the first glimpse of other moving figures. The track made by Antoine and his pal was so plain there seemed little chance that it could be lost.

"We're bound to get 'em yet, Elmer!" gasped Amos, as though it would give him a little more confidence to have his chum make a similar declaration.

"We certainly will, if it's humanly possible," Elmer assured him. "But this gun is beginning to feel like it weighed a ton."

"I'd drop the old thing then, Elmer."

"Nixey for me," the other went on to say with his customary determination that sometimes bordered on stubbornness. "Carried it so far, and mean to stick through. Can't tell but what it may come in mighty handy again. Served me one good turn already."

Of course part of this was as Greek to Amos. There had thus far been no time to tell him about the odd little circumstance connected with Elmer's stoppage of the flight of the messenger pigeon bearing that vitally important cipher communication which Antoine had been intending sending to the German High Command.

"Oh! listen!" suddenly cried Amos.

Both strained their ears to the utmost, though not slackening their efforts in the least. A singular sound was wafted to their hearing, doubly singular considering the fact that they were in such a lonely section of country, where not even a farm-road seemed to bisect the land.

If either of those lads had chanced to hear

that racket a couple of years back, while returning from some fishing trip in New England, they would have quickly said in unison that some farmer must be threshing his grain. But the conditions were so different now that such a thought did not enter their heads.

"Sounds like machinery at work!" suggested Amos, presently.

"Tell you what, that's likely to be an airplane propeller slashing away!" Elmer suddenly exclaimed, giving his companion another thrill.

"The two spies——" hoarsely shouted Amos, when the other broke in to say:

"Just what it means. They've got a plane hidden around here near the river. That second Hun must be the pilot. They count on being able to get away with it from under our noses!"

"Run faster, Elmer—we mustn't let 'em slip off now!"

So both let out another "kink," and managed to perceptibly increase their pace. It was the limit, however, and if life and death depended on their making better time neither would have been equal to the effort.

The woods had come to an end, with the

river close at hand, and only low, scrubby bushes were to be seen beyond. This allowed the two runners to have a fairly clear view of what lay ahead, so that they quickly glimpsed moving figures in one particular spot.

"There they are!" cried Amos, pointing.

"It's a plane, all right!" echoed his mate, as if that point had been settled beyond all controversy by the sight of the wide-spread wings now free of the branches and weeds that had camouflaged the machine while lying there in the open.

"Don't you see, they're climbing aboard right now?" shrilled Amos. "Oh! we'll fetch up just a minute too late to stop 'em. Too bad, Elmer; such rotten luck!"

"Hold on, everything hasn't gone yet!" spoke up his partner, unwilling to give in while the slightest hope remained.

He was already swinging his rifle part-way to his shoulder. Amos caught the significant movement, and a little gleam of renewed hope flashed into his despairing heart.

"Oh! if you could only smash their old petrol tank wouldn't it be great?" he cried out, jubilantly.

Both still ran on as though bent on getting

as close to the other couple as the seconds would allow. They could see that the two Huns were now settled in their seats aboard the plane, which Elmer could easily believe must be of French manufacture; for policy would have dictated that a German Fokker should not be used, since its accidental discovery might imperil their success, as well as lose them their lives.

It was a critical moment, and one filled with deepest anxiety for all concerned. The two spies must be troubled as to whether they would be able to make a successful start so as to get away; while Elmer and Amos on their part were just as eager that they should not be permitted to do so.

“There they go, Elmer!”

Small need for Amos to say this when any one with eyes could see for himself that the airplane no longer rested motionless there on the ground. It had commenced to move, at first slowly, but with constantly increasing momentum, as the experienced pilot brought more power to bear.

Its motion was anything but graceful, for it wobbled furiously, as though the path might be very rough. Yet the aviator had picked out

the best line of advance that offered itself. When making landings in unexplored regions it is often much easier to drop down safely than to get away again. And no doubt this Hun driver was doing his level best.

One thing Elmer noted that gave him a sort of grim satisfaction. It was as if Fate had taken the cards in hand, and was playing the game so as to favor the pursuing marines.

Much against his will of course, but urged on by necessity, the pilot had to run on a parallel line with the advancing Yanks when thus trying for a flight. The river was close by, and this cut him off from going directly away from the enemy, as doubtless he would have liked very much to do.

Consequently it seemed likely that Elmer might be given a fairly decent opportunity to get in a few well directed shots at the rising plane before it could swing entirely past his position.

He was breathing fast, and this might interfere to some extent with the accuracy of his aim; but then a good marksman can shoot by intuition when the occasion demands; and Elmer had himself brought down more than one



swift-flying quail or partridge by a shot from the hip.

He kept his eyes glued on the moving plane, now actually approaching them on a slant. It had attained sufficient speed, he imagined, to enable the pilot to shunt his rudder, and leave the ground, if there was no upset immediately on account of the rough surface over which the rubber-tired wheels were bumping and bouncing.

Amos gave a loud yell.

"There they rise, Elmer! Oh! get in a crack now, and don't I hope you drop the old thing in the river!"

Both marines had come to a halt. There was no use in further running on their part. Either the plane would get clear or else be brought down through a lucky shot on the part of the Yankee marksman.

Amos would perhaps have held his breath in suspense only for the fact that it was utterly out of the question now, after his long and exhausting chase through the woods after the fugitives. But he fixed his gleaming eyes on the rising plane, and allowed his hopes to have full swing.

Elmer did not hesitate.

He knew that if he was smart he would be allowed several shots at the target before it could get out of rifle range. If the first bullet failed to either wing the pilot or pierce his petrol tank, a second or even a third might be more fortunate.

With the crash of the gun Amos started, and then gave a whoop.

"You hit the bally pilot that time, sure, Elmer; I saw his left arm drop to his side. If only it had been the right one they'd have come a cropper!"

Before he had said the last word the gun spoke again. This time nothing seemed to follow. The airplane continued to mount rapidly, was already a respectable distance from the ground, and going strong.

Nothing daunted, Elmer again raised his rifle. He fancied this shot must be the deciding factor, since the chances of accomplishing any damage were rapidly diminishing, for the plane was leaving them in the lurch. He seemed to be taking aim this time, Amos noticed, Amos who with both hands doubled in his excitement was dancing nervously up and down, but also watching like a hawk, still hoping for a streak of good luck.

Then came the discharge, and almost immediately a whoop as though Amos might have received a pleasing shock.

"Got him, Elmer!" he shrilled, excitedly. "You queered his little old motor all right that time, I tell you! See him falling, will you, even if he's swinging out over the river in circles, trying to break the force of the drop! Bully boy! Elmer! I just *knew* you could fetch him yet. Those two skunks will have a date with General Mangin, believe me, and the firing squad! Whoop-la! talk to me about Yankee greenhorns, they can see the Hun, and go him one better every time. Oh! listen to that crash, will you, Elmer? The plane landed on the bank after all, when I thought it would drop in the river. I wonder if they are alive—or dead, poor wretches?"

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE MISSING SPY.

**B**OTH of them hurried forward.

They could not help feeling something akin to a sensation of reluctance to look upon a grewsome sight; for as yet neither had become accustomed to seeing suffering. Still, they were soldiers, and must make up their minds to stand anything that came along.

The wreckage of the plane lay in plain sight there on the bank, not more than a dozen feet from the brink. Beyond lay the narrow river, deep in spots, after the Spring rains.

Something moved amidst the confused mass of broken wings and other stuff that littered the ground. Amos saw it, and immediately gave tongue:

“One of the pair is alive, anyway, you can see, Elmer! Yes, it must be the pilot, because his left arm is hanging limp, just like I told you after your first shot. We must look to his wounds, poor chap, I suppose, even if he is a Hun, and a spy!”

On arriving at the spot they hastened to drag the man out from among the broken parts of the plane, which in diving had smashed its nose against the hard ground.

"But there were two!" burst out Amos; "I don't see anything of the other fellow, and we've combed every bit of this stuff here."

Elmer frowned.

"Yes, what could have become of Antoine?" he remarked, perplexity in his tone.

"They were both aboard the plane when she started to drop, that's sure!" asserted his companion, positively.

Elmer nodded his head. Had not he, too, made sure of that fact when taking aim the last time? His wandering gaze sought the flowing river, as if a sudden idea might have flashed through his mind.

"He must have fallen out, or jumped, when they were over the water!" was the suggestion he made.

"That's possible," assented Amos. "Seems to me I did hear a sort of splash, but thought the engine might have fallen out, or a machine-gun more likely. But up or down stream I don't see anything of the chap, Elmer."

Both stared harder than ever.

The current of the little river flowed steadily onward, nor were there any eddies or circles to betray the truth. If Antoine had dropped into the stream he must have sunk instantly. Was he then really dead? Elmer felt a chill in the region of his heart at the bare thought. He was still new at this business of man-hunting, it should be remembered. Later on, after the Hun came in his might, all this would be changed; but now it almost overpowered him.

He took a fresh grip on himself, however, and faced the conditions bravely. It had only been in the course of his duty that he had thus brought down the airplane containing the two spies. But for that lucky shot they might have gotten clear away; and if Antoine had managed to reach the German lines was he not fairly filled with the important information he had been so busily engaged in picking up?

"It would be impossible for him to stay this long under the water, if he happened to still be alive!" he was saying, half to himself, but Amos took up the idea like a flash.

"Well, I should say it would!" he declared, vehemently. "I'm a sort of amphibious chap,



being well posted on all such matters; and I tell you no human being could hold his breath this long. I don't see a sign of him among the sedge grass by the banks, do you, Elmer?"

"He must be a goner!" admitted the other, trying to appear quite cool, though likely enough his heart was fluttering wildly at the thought of having "done for" his first Hun.

"What shall we do with this other chap?" demanded Amos; and no sooner had he said this than he gave a screech, and flung himself straight toward the pilot of the wrecked plane.

The fellow had been sitting on the ground since they pulled him out of the wreckage. Goaded by the pain of his wounds, as well as the dismal prospect that faced him as a spy found within the enemy's lines, the German had been tugging at a huge automatic which he carried on his person. This he had just managed to free from its leather holster at the instant Amos sighted him, and realized the desperate intentions of the fellow.

Never in his palmiest football days had Amos made a smarter lunge and tackle than he did just then. There was need of haste, for the Hun undoubtedly meant to open on them at short range. It would only take two

shots to dispose of both of the marines; when at least he would have a small chance to get clear.

Amos' cry had directed the attention of Elmer to the spot. He ducked, and then started to follow after his companion. There was no need of any reinforcement, however, since Amos had knocked the automatic from the nervous grip of the pilot, and with his own weight hurled the other flat on his back.

"The viper!" gurgled Amos, rubbing his barked knee with a grimace. "You can't trust a Hun for an inch. He'd have knocked the two of us over like ten-pins if I hadn't stopped his little game!"

"Can you blame him," Elmer remarked, "when you stop to think what he's up against? A spy takes his life in his hand every time he goes into the enemy camp. He can give a pretty good guess what's coming to him before long."

Amos nodded his head. A slight shadow crossed his usually beaming face.

"That's so," he went on to say, "it is pretty rough on the poor chap, I guess, and perhaps I oughtn't to blame him for anything he might do. Of course we'll have to take a look at

his hurts, Elmer. I wouldn't let a dog suffer needlessly, if I could help it."

Elmer cast a last earnest glance up and down the narrow river. He scanned both shores as though still possessed of a slight suspicion that the tricky Antoine Maillard, Nellie's French cousin, might after all have been smart enough to deceive them, and be lying concealed under some floating water grass. But he failed to discover anything to tell him that this might be so.

"Certainly we must try to ease his pain as much as we can," he told his comrade. "Even if a man is condemned to be hung or electrocuted his jailers will call in the prison doctor if he gets a stomach-ache. Justice must be done, in war-times or when peace reigns; but that's no reason men should be savages, or heartless."

"Huh! it's mighty little medical attention a Yank would get from these same Huns, I should say, if ever he had the hard luck to fall into their hands, judging from all we've heard," Amos grunted, though he kept close to his chum, as if ready to assist in any way possible.

The wounded pilot looked at them as

though hardly able to understand just what they meant to do. Perhaps he fancied they intended to finish him because of his recent attempt on their lives.

When, however, Elmer commenced to gently remove his heavy pilot's coat so he might the easier get at the injured arm, a light broke over the other's heavy face. He had guessed their motive now, and was not averse to allowing them to minister to his hurts, which must be paining him considerably.

It turned out that not only had he been shot through the left arm, but in the fall received a number of severe contusions. Taken altogether he was in a bad way; and it was a problem just how they were going to get him to camp, which was some miles distant.

Elmer had learned his lesson of rendering "first aid" and was capable of attending to any ordinary case like this. Then, in addition, he made it a practice to always carry along with him a few small rolls of bandaging tape, which fact proved to be a fortunate thing in the present instance.

There was some liniment, too, which he rubbed on the bruises of the pilot. Really the two Americans must have created a queer im-

pression on that Hun aviator. If he had ever heard of the Good Samaritan he must have imagined himself to be the man who had fallen among thieves, and whom the priest and the Levite passed by without paying the least heed, until along came the one whose heart could feel for even an enemy in trouble.

"Now," remarked Amos, when the job had been finished, "what next, Elmer? You're a sergeant, while I'm only a poor corporal; and I'll have to take my orders from you, I guess."

"We've got to get this man to camp, to begin with," ventured the other.

"There's Dean coming along right now," snapped Amos, "and when Frazer arrives we'll have two husky chaps to carry him between them."

"That's so," admitted Elmer. "And if necessary we could make some sort of rude litter to lay him on. For one I haven't forgotten what I learned when a scout."

"Same here," echoed his comrade; "but I don't believe we'll have to delay long enough to do that. These chaps have worked with the ambulance corps, and know just how best to carry a wounded man. We can depend on them, Elmer. But while one of the spies has

been nabbed, and the chief conspirator gone to his death in the river, seems like, I'm awful sorry I got around too late."

"Too late for what?" demanded Elmer.

"To put a stop to that pigeon racket, I mean. If they managed to start out one of their old birds, the fat is all in the fire."

"Do you really think so?" asked Elmer, with a grin that rather puzzled his companion a little.

"Why, don't you see," Amos went on to promptly explain, "of course they'd be entrusting a message to the best bird in the coop, and by now it's arrived safe and sound at its home place. Why, a waiting plane may be carrying the cipher message straight to German Headquarters; so that soon they'll know all about the number and disposition of the Yanks, something that's been kept mighty quiet up to now. It's tough luck, I say. Just came along too late to stop the flight!"

"Don't worry, Amos!"

As Elmer said this he proceeded to thrust a hand into one of the side pockets of his coat. The other's eyes followed the movement closely. There began to come upon the face of Amos an eager look of anticipation, as



though a dim suspicion of the truth had dawned upon him.

Slowly Elmer withdrew his hand. It held something strange, something that looked like a bunch of huddled feathers; and they were of a peculiar slate color in the bargain.

"Oh! what are you showing me?" Amos asked in hushed accents, as if thrilled by the impending discovery.

"That was once a homing pigeon," said Elmer, soberly, though his eyes were dancing merrily as he watched the lights and shadows play across the countenance of his old-time friend. "I believe they called this bird the pick of the flock, and so they named him—Kaiser!"

"And he was selected to carry the precious message—is that what you mean, Elmer?"

Instead of answering in words Elmer lifted some of the feathers and disclosed an object that nestled there.

"Oh! the little tube that keeps the message from getting wet! Elmer, you're sure a dandy! How did you ever manage to do it? Was the bird flying away when you shot it? for I should say from its looks that was

the way it died. Please do open up and tell me about it."

"The story will keep, I guess, so far as details go," Elmer hastened to observe. "Just now I'll only say that I was looking into the old shack through a wide crack. They'd fixed the bird to fly, and it stood on the table, while the pair admired its strong wings and prize markings. I knew I'd never have such a chance again, for all I carried was my rifle; so I poked the barrel through—and shot it into a mess—blew it across the room in fact."

"Whew! I bet you they were a surprised bunch!" cried the enthusiastic Amos, insisting on wringing the hand of the other.

"They sure were," agreed Elmer, with a grin of merriment upon recollecting how both men fell over as the terrific crash sounded so close to their ears. "After that things began to happen. I'll tell you all about it later, for the yarn will keep; and we ought to be getting this chap in without any more delay than we can help."

Amos gave him a last admiring look.

"Well, you're just as modest as you are brave, Elmer," he persisted in saying. "No boasting, or even gloating over the fallen foe;

but taking things as they come; and binding up the Hun's injuries just as if he might be your brother."

"So he is, after a fashion, a sort of Prodigal Son who's wandered out into the wicked world, and lived riotously. Pretty soon he'll be coming to himself, and feel like going home to eat humble pie, and behave."

"Huh! don't believe that ever will happen till we've licked 'em good and hard," said the skeptical Amos. "These Huns are queer people, and must either rule or else lick the boots of those over them. But here's Dean, and I can see my other man coming along; so we'd best get ready to move."

## CHAPTER XII.

## DUTY WELL DONE.

IT was soon arranged that a start should be made for camp, Elmer leading the way; for he had urged Amos to have the wounded man carried to that section of the line held by his particular company.

"You've got all the say, Elmer," admitted the other; "because the glory belongs to you, I guess. So I'll be glad to go along. Besides, I'd like to meet that boss captain of yours, and only hope he may be *my* superior some of these fine days."

"I'm going to work for it the hardest ever," said Elmer. "If there's anything coming to me for bagging this spy, it's been with your great assistance, and so I've got a peg to hang my request on, you see."

"Mighty little help did I give, seems to me," grumbled Amos.

"None of that now, my boy," the other told him. "What would have happened to little Elmer for instance, if you and your men

hadn't arrived just in the nick of time, when they had me caged; and, blinded with smoke, I was just about to dash out, to be shot down like a helpless rabbit?"

"Oh! well, that was all right, and perhaps it might have gone hard with you if we hadn't bobbed upon the stage like we did."

"They'd have been able to recover the message, and getting another bird send it along to the Huns," added Elmer, triumphantly. "Then again both of us might have been shot down here by this pilot only for you glimpsing what he was up to, and making a beautiful tackle, so as to knock the automatic out of his hand. By the way I want to get that gun for a keepsake."

Amos looked somewhat pleased.

It was fine for Elmer to talk like that, and the prospect ahead no longer seemed shrouded in gloom. If some of the glory was to come in his direction, why, perhaps he, too, might prefer a request to be exchanged to Captain Fuller's company, as a reward of merit, a very simple favor to ask, too, it would seem.

Frazer had come up and regained some of his lost breath. Between the two of them they announced that they would have little or no

difficulty in carrying the wounded man to camp, even without a stretcher.

Elmer could not forbear taking one last look up and down the river. He was almost sorry now he had not decided to wait a bit longer so that he might make some sort of search along the shores; for he seemed to be haunted by a suspicion that possibly the clever Antoine might have played them a trick, and thus "saved his bacon."

But when he saw not the slightest sign of any living thing in sight, he felt that there was not one chance in ten of the other surviving a fall from the plunging plane; so he reconciled himself to leaving the spot.

The two non-coms strode on in the advance, with Frazer and Dean bringing up the rear, carrying the wounded Hun. He grunted now and then, which was the nearest he allowed himself to uttering a groan when his injuries gave him sudden stabs.

It proved to be a long way back to the place where the remnant of the former home of the French peasant farmer had stood. From the smoke that greeted them before they reached the place the boys knew the fire had gone on in its work of destruction.



“Not much left by now, looks to me,” suggested Amos, when they came in sight of the spot, to see the fire still burning furiously, with the cracked stone walls emitting great volumes of acrid smoke.

“And those pigeons, poor things, must have smothered long before the flames reached the loft. I wish they could have escaped, for if they were all like that Kaiser it was sure a noble bunch of birds.”

“Yes, I remember that you always did take stock in carrier pigeons, and kept a number of them at home in Lynnhaven,” Amos remarked. “But by long odds the most valuable one you ever held in your hands was that bunch of feathers that’s lying now in your pocket.”

“Yes,” said the other reflectively, “because it represents the lives of hundreds on hundreds of our mates; for if that information had ever reached Hun Headquarters I guess they’d have known things about our disposition that would have given them a great advantage. I’d like to keep the remains of poor Kaiser, if they allow me; and each time I look at the bunch of feathers I’ll be able to see

everything that's happened on this remarkable day."

"No need of our hanging around here, I suppose?" ventured Amos.

"Of course not," he was told, "since everything has been cleaned up, and the enemy nest destroyed. So if your boys are still fit, we'll be ambling along."

Frazer and Dean announced that they were just as "fresh as daisies," and in a prime condition to "keep the ball rolling indefinitely," if the sergeant said the word. They seemed to realize that Elmer Ketcham was no ordinary chap; but capable of doing great things, did the chance but come his way.

Accordingly the march was resumed.

After a bit they came to the main road. Here they were likely to meet motor-trucks moving, though most of this work had been carried on during the nights, so that the enemy observers, floating over in their planes, might not get a line on the strength of the Americans from the number of loaded heavy vehicles coming from the southwest with supplies.

"Here we are in great luck," announced Elmer, almost as soon as they struck this main thoroughfare.

"One of the Red Cross ambulances coming along," observed Amos; "and sure enough, it's from Paris way, too."

"Empty, except for supplies of bandages and the like for the use of the field-hospitals when the big push strikes the Yank line," continued Elmer. "We'll try to hold the driver up, and get a ride to camp. When he sees we've got a badly wounded man along he can't say no."

"But—this man is a Hun!" exclaimed Amos.

"Doesn't matter a snap, he's hurt and needs attention in a hurry," he was informed. "Besides, I'll tell the driver something that's bound to make him let us climb aboard. It's an American ambulance, I guess, and a Yank driver, so we'll be sure of a square deal."

When Elmer stepped into the middle of the road and held up his arms the moving vehicle drew up sharply.

"What's eating you, sergeant?" grumbled a heavy voice. "Think this is a street car bound for the ball grounds, mebbe? Got another guess comin'. Clear the way and let me move along. I'm in a desperate hurry to get these things to where they're going."

"We've a badly wounded man here, Con O'Keefe," said Elmer, recognizing a driver who had been in the camp a number of times, and with whom he himself had often chatted and joked.

"Ye don't tell me? And so it's you, is it, Sergeant Ketcham? Well, shove the poor critter aboard on top of the cargo, and hop up here yourself, you and the corporal."

The two marines were doing this when the big driver let out a roar.

"Hey! what's this you're puttin' over on me, sarg? Is this fair to load me up with a bloody Hun? Make him walk the rest of the way in, says I, havin' seen some of the things his crowd did up Belgium way."

"But he couldn't walk, Con; he's too badly hurt for that," expostulated Elmer. "He's a Hun aviator who was helping get a spy away when we shot him down. Spy drowned in the river, but we got his homing pigeon, with the cipher message it carried in a little tube. Show it to you as we go along. Put the chap aboard, boys; and get in yourselves to look after him. He must not escape, remember, or be allowed to kill himself. A drum-head court will settle *his* case I guess."

The driver no longer offered objections. Truth to tell his curiosity had by this time been whetted to fever heat, and he was anxious to hear all about the strange happenings.

Accordingly, all of them were allowed to board the ambulance, after which Con once again made a start. The camp was not much more than a mile further on, but he chose to dally on the way, being eager not to lose any portion of Elmer's narrative. Understanding this the other made short work of his story, and showed the deeply interested Con the bunch of feathers, as well as the small waterproof capsule in which reposed the important communication which the missing spy had been anticipating dispatching by pigeon post to Hun Headquarters.

Presently they arrived.

It was close to the field hospital that the ambulance now stood, so there was going to be little trouble about getting the injured airman to the surgeon. Here he would receive just as good attention as though he were a Yank; only it might be necessary to station a sentry at his cot, to watch that he did not try to escape either by crawling away, or by the Long Trail through suicide.

"Next thing is to make my report to the captain," announced Elmer.

"Shall I wait around then, and see if he wants to ask any questions?" came from his comrade; "because the sooner we get that little game to working the better I'll be pleased for one."

"Yes, hang around," he was told. "I'll fix it so the captain'll be anxious to meet you. Then we can spring our request together. He's a good sort of a chap, as captains go, and I think will favor us all he can, especially if he fancies your ways, as I'm sure he will."

"Thanks for the compliment, old top!" said Amos, grinning. "It'll be just great if only we get roosting together. What jolly talks we can have of all the old schooldays we spent on the coast of Massachusetts, and the fights we've had on the diamond, the grid-iron, and everything. Go to it, Elmer, and do some high talking now, please."

Shortly afterwards Elmer found himself in the presence of Captain Fuller, who eyed him expectantly, as though he felt certain there was a story on tap well worth listening to.

"Make your report, Sergeant Ketcham,"



he told the other. "You've been gone longer than two hours, from which I surmise you've got something interesting to tell me."

"Hope I have, sir," replied the other.

Then he opened up with a description of all that had happened from the moment he again got on the track of the "suspect," and followed him to the lonely, partly ruined peasant's cottage, where another man awaited his coming, and the cooing of numerous pigeons told the story better than words could have done.

Captain Fuller sat and listened.

His grim face displayed a variety of emotions from time to time. This was particularly the case as the plot deepened, and Elmer came to where he had shot the bird called Kaiser, to prevent its escape, and consequent conveyance of the message to the enemy's lines.

Quite dramatically did Elmer fetch upon the scene that mess of slate-colored feathers, and display the tiny celluloid tube in which nestled a roll of very thin paper. The captain even took this out, and stared hard at the mass of strange markings placed there by the Hun spy, and which of course he understood must be writing done in a secret cipher.

“Go on, Sergeant, because I rather suspect you have still more to tell me,” was his only remark, though the look he cast on young Elmer was bordering on affection, as though he rather envied the father of such a splendid lad.

So the narrative was resumed, and the captain found his faith justified when he heard all about the fire, and the smoke that threatened to finish Elmer; and then was thrilled to learn how Amos Flagg came on the scene just in the nick of time, when all seemed lost.

Elmer made the most of this incident, wishing to influence the other in favor of his friend. After that he told of how they had chased blindly after the two escaping spies, of coming up with them close to the river, and what happened at that critical juncture.

Again he had the officer under a spell as he described how the plane was brought down through what he was pleased to term a “lucky shot,” though Captain Fuller was free to draw his own conclusions on that score.

“We bound up the wounded pilot’s hurts, Captain, and brought him to camp,” concluded the narrator, modestly; “he’s in the hospital just now, sir, but being watched every minute

of the time. That's all, sir. I hope I've accomplished my duty to your satisfaction, sir."

For answer the captain thrust out his hand, a most surprising thing for any officer to do when with a non-com.

"You've done splendidly, Sergeant Ketcham, and I congratulate you!" he said, actually squeezing Elmer's digits warmly.

"But I had a comrade, Captain, who also deserves mention, if there are any honors going around. I'd like you to meet Corporal Flagg, sir. I think he must be a trusted man in his own company, to be given such a job as trying to run down that German spy."

Captain Fuller smiled, as though he began to smell a rat.

"Let's have him in here then," he observed. "Is he a member of my company, Sergeant?"

"No sir, I am sorry to say he is not; though if you will allow me to tell you he hopes to be before long," came the reply. "He is not far away right now, Captain, and I can fetch him in here in a jiffy, sir."

"I wish you would do so then; I'd like to meet Corporal Flagg."

Amos was "hanging around" in hopes that

he might be called, and when Elmer gave him the "high sign" he responded with alacrity.

"Captain Fuller wants to see you, Amos; come along with me to his dugout," was the pleasant message the corporal heard.

"Got things started already, have you, Elmer; I must say you're a hustler," was the comment the pleased Amos made, as he hastened to start with his comrade.

"Nothing like striking while the iron's hot," chuckled the other; "and the captain showed a heap of interest in what I had to report. Why, he squeezed my hand like fun, and congratulated me. That was where I got in my little say about a chum I had, who saved the day when things looked pretty black for me."

"Rats!" grunted Amos; but all the same there was a pleasant expression on his face; for praise is always soothing, especially when coming from one held in such high regard as he did Elmer.

So they soon entered the official dugout, and Amos met Captain Fuller. He realized that everything said by Elmer with regard to his commanding officer must be true; and then and there did Amos cherish a redoubled hope

that through good fortune he might get his exchange into this company of fighters. He did not altogether fancy his own captain, who was a cold-blooded young chap, though smart enough for his position, and doubtless a good fighting man. In the veteran Fuller, Amos saw his ideal of a commander, whom every man in the company would risk his life for willingly.

More talk followed.

Captain Fuller proceeded to ask many questions, bent on bringing out some of the salient points of the great adventure on which the modest Elmer had touched more or less lightly, not wishing to sound his own praises.

In this way the captain learned all he wanted to know, by setting the two against each other; Elmer tried to give the lion's share of the result to Amos; while that worthy insisted that after all he had had only a minor part in the success achieved.

On the whole Captain Fuller must have enjoyed that half hour immensely; for it was not often he came in contact with two such fine fellows.

"And now," he said finally, when he fancied he had sifted the matter thoroughly, and

heard all the particulars, "what sort of a reward do you think you'd like for having saved this message from falling into the hands of the German General Staff; for you certainly deserve to be remembered, if ever two marines did?"

Amos and Elmer exchanged quick glances that did not escape the observation of the interested captain.

"It's this way, sir," Elmer started to say, "we come from nearby coast towns on the Massachusetts shore, and have played baseball, football, and all sorts of outdoor games together many a time. If only we could get together in the same company it would please us both very much. If you could arrange it, Captain, we'd like nothing better."

"Then you want to leave me, do you, Sergeant?" asked the officer, with a gleam of humor in his eye.

"Oh! no, sir, never!" cried Elmer, immediately. "It's just the other way. Amos wants to come over here, and join our company; for we're short several men of our full quota, sir. Do you think it could be arranged, Captain?"

"I'll see what can be done," he was told.



"Unless there are obstacles in the way I believe it can be arranged. A couple of days will tell the story. So I'll make a few necessary notes, and start proceedings in the morning."

The two beamed with delight.

"You couldn't please us better than by getting us this chance to see more of each other, Captain," asserted Elmer.

"And we'll be all the better soldiers from the contact, I assure you, sir," added Amos, warmly. "It'll do us so much good to be able to talk over old times, and read each others' home letters."

"I believe you, Corporal, for I've been homesick myself many a time, when ten thousand miles away from my folks, and never a letter for months. That will be all for the present. When I learn anything worth while, Sergeant, I'll send for you. But don't think this little favor will be the only notice taken of your really brilliant action. It will go on the records, and in due time ought to earn both of you a citation at least, if nothing more. I've known of a Victoria Cross being given to a Tommie for less valor than the brand you have shown."

No wonder then their hearts beat faster

than their wont as they sought the outside air.

"I can well believe all you said about your fine captain, Elmer!" declared Amos, his eyes glowing with happiness. "He's just the type of a commander I want to serve under. And I sure hope he's able to make connections for us."

"Don't worry, for something tells me he will do it," said the other, confidently.

Amos and his two men now had to leave for their own section of the line, some miles distant. But two days later what was the surprise and delight of Elmer to see his friend show up again, and tell him he had this time come to stay, as the transfer had been pushed through in a hurry, because from all indications the terrible German drive against the American line was about to begin.

Elmer had tried to keep track of the wounded Hun aviator, since he felt more than a passing interest in the fellow. Secretly he was pleased to learn that it had been decided to hold him only as an ordinary prisoner, though the chances were he had such connections with the spy work of Antoine that he might have been adjudged guilty if tried, and consequently shot. But the Americans were

apt to be more lenient than either the British or the French.

Elmer was glad, because he could feel that he had not been the main cause of the man's being put to death. He was still new at those things, but from all appearances a few weeks of intensive warfare would make a hardened veteran of every man in General Bartlett's marine corps.

And so came that historic fifth of June, when the Yanks were to be given their first chance to stand alone before the furious charge of skilled shock troops gathered along this sector with the idea of smashing through at all costs.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE GERMAN SHOCK UNITS.

WHEN the Germans struck, on that memorable day in early June, it was with the impact of a thunderbolt forged by immortal Jove.

They had made every possible preparation to sweep the "contemptible little Yankee army" out of their path. Their assurance rested upon solid grounds, for latterly neither the British nor the French had been able to withstand the fury of those massed forces.

So along the whole front the storm broke.

Innumerable guns, both large and small, belched out their shot and shell until it must have seemed to the Americans who were receiving their baptism of fire as though an Inferno had burst upon them.

Through this awful medley of smoke and racket came the German shock troops. Their manner was confident, almost gay. Some of them advanced to the attack with patriotic songs on their lips; and the shouted chorus

could at times be heard rising above all the furious din.

The marines waited in their trenches.

Doubtless every man must be thrilled with the consciousness that the wonderful crisis so long anticipated had come at last; but there was not a single sign of dread. They had been picked for this service, each one chosen because of his peculiar fitness, and well they knew that the eyes of the whole world would be upon them this day.

The officers went among them with words of encouragement. There must be no yielding of ground, no retreating. They were there to hold on like bulldogs, or die at their posts.

So came the Germans, expecting to smash through as had of late become their settled habit. They believed nothing human could withstand the tremendous power of their push.

If the first phalanx was mowed down by Yankee guns another coming close on would take its place. Grimly they meant to overrun the positions of the Americans no matter what the cost.

Suddenly the signal was given that unleashed the Yankee dogs of war. Battery after battery responded. Along the entire

front ran a fringe of fire. It was like a hundred blacksmiths smiting their anvils with enormous sledge hammers.

Now the rifle fire joined in. Then innumerable machine guns took up the song, adding their barking to the general clatter and roar.

The first German line was no more. It had crumpled up as a windrow of dead leaves might in the track of a furious forest fire. The ground was not simply strewn with the dead and wounded—it was piled breast high in some places where the cross-fire chanced to be most deadly.

This was the beginning.

The marines had thus far done well, but their work was cut out for them. Close up came the second body of picked shock troops. They did not advance in the customary “waves” but in a solid body, the idea being that if once they could gain a footing in the enemy lines their formation would render them irresistible.

So once more the carnage began.

There was more German singing, answered by defiant cheers from the marines. Still the Americans must have felt more or less admi-



ration for the splendid courage shown by those veteran Hun fighters as reaching the windrows of fallen comrades they coolly climbed over, many going down in the effort.

On they came, running now and looking like a cloud of dust stirred up by the advance of a summer storm.

The Yankee batteries had slackened their fire. Perhaps some of the gunners had fallen with the rain of shells by which every part of the front was deluged. Then again it may have been that some miscalculation had been made regarding the supply of ready ammunition.

Be the cause what it might, masses of the Germans were enabled to rush forward and join the battle hand to hand with the waiting marines. And back yonder could be seen coming on more dense waves of men in dark green. They seemed to be as countless as grains of sand on the seashore.

But when it came to meeting the enemy at close quarters that was where the marine shone best. Much of his intensive drilling had been along the line of bayonet practice, in which every member of the entire corps was deemed proficient.

Heine now had a great surprise awarded him.

That strong point of the marines was the weak spot of the German shock troops. They had been drilled in everything possible, so that in most cases their rushes proved irresistible; but nothing known to their instructors could overcome that natural shrinking from cold steel.

It made itself felt time and again through the whole war. Canadians and Australians, strapping fellows all, had often hurled the Huns back through their expert use of the bayonet. The French, too, relied upon steel a good bit, but the Germans never seemed to take to it as well, being better pleased with grenades, poison gas and trench bombs.

The fighting became furious. Man against man they struggled, sometimes with success falling to the lot of the Yankee, and again a German coming off victor.

All the while the batteries kept up their incessant clamor, and great gaps were being hewn in the ranks of the fresh oncoming legions.

It must have seemed to those American soldier boys, fresh to the fighting as they were,

as though the whole of Hindenburg's vast army had been massed to overwhelm them. Whichever way one looked there were Germans advancing or fighting; and through the smoke eddies still others were coming on, wave after wave, regiment after regiment.

At first no doubt many of the marines felt a weakness in the region of their stomachs, so much slaughter sickening them. This feeling speedily passed away as the fever of battle filled their veins, and nerved their arms.

Elmer and Amos were there with the rest, doing their duty manfully. They saw comrades fall on this side or that. At first it seemed frightful, but as with the rest they soon came to forget everything save that they were there to kill Germans, so as to avenge the atrocities of Belgium and Northern France.

Where the fighting was hottest the pair could be found, rallying their men, and personally doing what share of the work came to their hands.

On every side history was being made. The marines had held their ground. They were standing like a rock in this their initial battle before Chateau Thierry. And already the Germans must have begun to realize the

absurdity of the boast made by their officers for so long, to the effect that Americans were only good at chasing the dollar, and would not fight.

This sort of thing was going on along the whole front occupied by the American marines. They were being put to the severest test any army could have imposed upon it. That fifth day of June would ever be immortalized in the annals of the "devil dogs" as the surprised Germans soon learned to call the marines.

Back and forth the tide of battle fluctuated. Here the Germans by sheer force of numbers made a gain; further on they themselves met with a loss, so that when the battle ended for the first day honors were pretty evenly divided.

But the advantage all lay with the Yanks.

The Germans no longer felt their former confidence. They had at last met an enemy who refused to be thrown back; or, if they were temporarily dispossessed, returned to the fray, stubbornly declining to consider one test a final decision.

When making another attempt they were likely to feel far less assurance. Those

Yankees could fight after all. They had proved it in a thousand ways by meeting the picked troops of the Prussian Guard and decimating their ranks most frightfully.

What was still more alarming they actually seemed to enjoy their first taste of fighting, and acted as though greedy for more. When dawn came again no doubt they would be found holding themselves in readiness for another warm session. The fighting would be resumed, and the dreadful scenes of the previous day be repeated, with the exception that the Germans must have lost considerable of their former confidence, while the Americans had learned their ability to hold their own.

As Gettysburg in the Civil War marked the turning point of the struggle, so this wonderful day when the American marines held Hindenburg's picked shock troops was destined to be known as the beginning of the end of Germany's aggressive tactics.

Soon afterward the masterful Marshal Foch would be ready to strike here and there all along the extended front from Switzerland to the sea, keeping the enemy anxious, not knowing where the decisive blow would fall, and thus demoralizing the German morale.

So the great day closed.

No one was sorry when darkness came on, putting an end to the struggle for the American trenches.

But although the first phase of the battle was thus closed, there would be no cessation in the activities. All through that night troops would be changing positions, worn and torn and decimated regiments being replaced by others better able to withstand the next day's gruelling test.

Batteries would be brought up to fresh positions, deemed more advantageous after the first experience. New supplies of munitions must be advanced, and in various ways every preparation made to be in readiness for the second coming of the stubborn foe.

And undoubtedly across the German lines the same feverish activity prevailed. There must be a swift shifting of battalions, many going to the rear to have the gaps in their ranks filled from the replacement troops.

This was one side of the shield.

On the other lay the work of the legions of mercy, those tireless toilers whose mission on the battlefield was to rescue the perishing,



to care for the dying. All through the night they would be kept busy.

Lights flickering here and there told of stretcher bearers stumbling amidst the heaps of fallen. Friend and foe alike would be succored if the breath of life still remained. Many a wounded Hun, private or officer, would find his injuries attended to by a Yankee surgeon and a gentle nurse wearing the sacred insignia of the Red Cross.

They did not deserve such attention, those Germans, whose shells and bombs had so often fallen upon hospitals and steamships carrying wounded Tommies across to England, as though they held a special grudge against the Red Cross workers; but in spite of all this, no animosity was shown them at dressing station or field hospital.

Along the roads leading toward Paris swarms of vehicles of every description—ambulances, motor trucks and the like would continue to go and come with every hour of the night. Hundreds upon hundreds of brave fellows must be sent on to the big base hospitals prepared by American capital for their reception when the time came for Pershing's boys to get into the fight.

Above all this there rose one dominant thought to give encouragement and hope to high and low alike. The shock had come and the Americans had held their own! The proud boast of the Prussian had not been fulfilled. Battered and sore and bleeding, he had striven madly to break through that stone wall only to be hurled back whence he came, impotent, and with gnashing teeth.

That glorious news must by now be flashing all over France and England, where anxious hearts had waited to learn the outcome. It was also being transmitted to far distant America to thrill countless millions in strong head lines in the morning papers.

The marines had held!

Those who were farsighted enough to see beyond the present found reason to exult. They knew that bulldog holding on the part of the marines meant the eventual downfall of tyranny and militarism, of world ambitions, Kaiserism and the final defeat of Germany.

On the rock of that glorious corps of American marines the German ship was to be wrecked. So history had been in the making on that fifth day of June, and every American

survivor of the battle could consider that he had a hand in the momentous decision.

In years to come it would be a proud boast for any man to be able to say he had been in that affair before Chateau Thierry, and a member of the marines.

No doubt the German High Command would renew the battle on the coming day. They could not afford to do otherwise, as it would be the same as admitting defeat. But their hopes must be crumbling, and all their anticipations of a *debacle* turning to disappointment.

As for the Americans, they had found themselves. The baptism of battle had shown them what they could do. After that single day's trial they would be eager to again pit their resources against those of the foe.

Now they knew just how the Germans fought, and experience would allow them to take advantage of certain errors of judgment noted by the observing officers. On the whole the staff found abundant reason to believe they would be able to prove more than a match for the Hun, no matter how long he kept up his system of sacrificing vast numbers of his best troops in the mad effort to break through.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## AFTER THE BATTLE.

WE can thank our lucky stars we're here tonight, unwounded, and not lying out there on the battle-field."

It was Elmer who said this, and the one to whom he addressed the remark was of course no other than Corporal Amos Flagg.

They had taken a fair share in such fighting as came to their company. There were times when the furious warfare surged around them, and they met the savage Prussian Guard hand to hand. In every instance the men of Captain Fuller came out of the *mêlée* with deserved credit. The old fighter was proud of their valiant work, nor did he hesitate to tell them so between times, when they were getting their breath, and waiting for the next spell.

They had not come through it all unscathed. Quite a number of the boys had been downed during the day, some wounded more or less severely; while others would never fight again,

since they had made the supreme sacrifice for liberty throughout the world, having given their young lives to make democracy safe, and forever banish the rule of autocracy and militarism.

Amos looked unusually serious, for him. Indeed, what those boys had seen and endured since the rising of the sun on that June day was enough to make any one have grave thoughts. With carnage and agony all around them it was hardly the time or place for levity.

"It has been a wonderful experience for all of us, for a fact, Elmer," he now went on to remark, "and one we'll never be apt to forget either, if so be we live through the rest of the fighting. But any way those Huns learned something that's going to get their goat, believe *me!*"

"Yes, they'll quit saying now that Americans are only good for chasing the dollars around, and can't fight one little bit. They used to believe that fairy story too; but they know better now."

"Have you seen the Hun prisoners we captured?" asked Amos.

"From time to time I can remember some drifting through to the rear, holding their

hands up, just like we've seen Western bandits on the movie screen doing when the sheriff came along with his posse; but have they got a bunch of them?"

"I'll show you, if you come along with me," suggested the other.

Shortly afterwards they found themselves staring at a peculiar sight. There inside what might be called a stockade or corral made of barbed wire fully a hundred Huns had been herded. They were those who had given up during the fierce fighting of the day; sometimes only too gladly they admitted being tired to death of war, and its deprivations, as well as the abuse of their cruel officers after the customary German fashion, privates being looked upon merely as "cannon fodder."

"A rum looking lot all told, eh, Elmer?" queried Amos.

"Well, many of them do look pretty tough," admitted the other; "but then we've got to remember what they've been through. Food, clothing, and shoes are all mighty scarce in the Fatherland, and these chaps have been through privations that would try any fellow. They look forlorn, too, most of them; though some seem to be grinning, as if they felt ready



to laugh over getting out of the fighting so easy."

Quite a crowd of the marines surrounded the "cage" most of the time, staring at their first batch of Hun prisoners, and often making jocular remarks, which might have offended some of the officers among the Germans could they have fully understood their meaning.

"Well, we haven't lost any Heine that I know of," chuckled Amos, finally, "and for one I don't care to stand around here any longer staring at them as if they were wild animals in a trap. Let's vamose, Elmer."

The other was quite willing to make a change of base. Both boys were very tired after all those exciting events of the day, and in need of rest.

"Like as not there's bound to be a whole lot more of the same kind of stuff handed out to us tomorrow," suggested Elmer, as they walked away, "and we want to be in decent shape to hold up our end of the log at the rolling."

"You don't think our company is going to be pushed back to the rear, do you?" further inquired Amos; and from the anxious way in which he asked the question it was plain to

be seen such an event would appear to him in the light of a calamity indeed.

“Sure not,” ventured the confident Elmer, quickly. “Why, we’ve only begun to get our fighting blood up to the right pitch. It would be a wicked shame to side-track us now. Besides, we haven’t lost such a bunch of men as all that. If we’d been shot all to pieces there might be some reason to set our company to one side until it could be reconstructed again from the replacement camps.”

“Glad to hear you say that, then!” declared the other, looking relieved. “I’m here to fight, and I want to get all I can of it. Every time I jig a Hun I tell myself ‘That’s one for bleeding Belgium,’ and ‘another for ruined France!’ Goin’ to take a heap of knocking to satisfy my feelings.”

“Same here,” his chum hastily said. “Every time I find myself beginning to pity a German who seems in hard luck I see the faces of murdered babes from the *Lusitania* floating in the cold sea water, and my blood fairly boils again.”

“If Germany is ever whipped to a frazzle, as Teddy would say, it’s going to be through

the memory of that frightful slaughter of innocents," ventured Amos.

"I don't suppose it'd be possible now for us to find the hut open, and going, on this night after the fighting?" mused Elmer; at which his friend chuckled softly to himself, for he had met Nell Gwynne, and did not blame the other for feeling such a deep interest in the pretty little Y.M.C.A. worker.

"I don't know," he remarked. "The girls didn't run away through all the fighting as I chanced to know. You see I was detailed by Lieutenant Worden to take two wounded chaps around to the field hospital; and would you believe me among the nurses there I ran across your little friend, as busy as a bee, and making many a fellow sit up and take notice, to the neglect of his painful hurt."

"Are you speaking of Nellie Gwynne, Amos?"

"I certainly am doing that same," he was assured.

"And she was doing duty as a nurse, you tell me?" continued Elmer, a proud glow in his eyes.

"Oh! I guess they had to impress every one into the work, the cases were coming so thick

and fast," Amos explained. "But she acted as if she might have been through the mill before, for no nurse knew better just how to attend to a fellow's wounds. I think the sight of her helped a lot of them to forget their trouble for the time; it gave them a taste of the dear old homeland, you know."

"I noticed one Hun in that cage who was wearing an aviator's outfit," remarked Elmer, presently. "Did you happen to glimpse him too?"

"Yes, and I happen to know just how he got there," came the reply. "While the fight was joined there were times when the enemy battle-planes made swoops, and ducked low down, so as to use their rapid-fire guns on us. One machine got in the way of a volley from rifles, and came plunging down like a wounded duck. Of course we surrounded it in a hurry. The pilot started in on us with his automatic, so we had to wind him up pretty short. It was his observer who came crawling out of the wreck holding both hands up, and yelling 'kamarad' at the top of his voice. So we ran him in, and he's there, tight and fast."

"I'd have liked to watch some of the air fights that were going on much of the time,"

pursued Elmer. "They must have been something fierce, from all accounts."

"Yes, and the Yanks held their own, too, believe me, Elmer. You know we've got a fine bunch of aces with us nowadays, chaps who won their spurs in the Lafayette Escadrille, fighting for France, and came over when a separate American army was organized. They can give the Hun points, and beat him at his own game, too. I saw them swoop down, and scatter whole regiments with their fire."

"If I wasn't a marine do you know I'd like to be a flier, Amos. Strikes me they have pretty much all the fun and excitement going these days."

"Oh! now we've started there'll be plenty to go around, never fear, Elmer. After the licking we gave Fritz today he'll be hungry for revenge, and keep things pretty warm around here. But mark my words, we'll be in Chateau Thierry long before snow flies; and after that it'll be a regular walk for us over the Rhine."

A portion of that prediction on the part of sanguine Amos Flagg came true, but the "walk to the Rhine" was fated to be held up

until after the armistice was signed, and Germany owned to defeat.

After learning that the company was billeted to remain in its present quarters for another siege of the fighting, should the Huns renew the assault on the coming day, the two chums lay down to get what rest they could. By now they were able to sleep through a bombardment. Shells might explode close by, and not awaken them from their sound sleep. And yet if a certain signal were given both would spring to their feet instantly, ready to repel the onswEEPing foe.

All night long the Americans slept on their arms, for there was no telling how desperate the Huns might be, or what strange measures they would adopt looking to the surprising of the tenacious foe.

But there was nothing of the kind came to pass. Possibly it took the German officers pretty much all night to whip their torn front into line again; so that they were in no condition to attack.

Morning again.

The marines got an early breakfast. This was taken to those in the most advanced positions by agile fellows who could creep along



pretty much like a cat might when approaching a bird it yearned to have for dinner. Thus fortified they announced themselves "fit" for anything in the fighting line that might be doled out to them.

Many glasses were focussed on the German positions, where it could be seen the most unusual activity reigned. Undoubtedly another attack was being staged, and fresh battalions being arranged for the initial thrust.

On the American side everything was ready for business. The wounded had all been brought in, and attended to. Most of them were on their way to the capital, where generous hands had prepared great hospitals for their reception, with every appliance for comfort that modern science could devise ready to make them new men again, so if possible they might be returned to their commands.

Out in front of the position there could still be seen those gruesome heaps of mangled human beings, mostly in the dark green German uniforms. Unless all signs failed these were bound to be augmented by another offering of victims on the altar of Hohenzollern greed and lust of conquest.

So the word passed along that the Germans

were forming for the assault. Behind the wood and various like shelters they got their masses together ready for the initial smash, after the batteries had kept up a constant rain of shells for a certain length of time.

Then the blast came.

If anything it was worse than that of the previous day, proving that fresh batteries had been linked up with the others, so as to make a greater impression on the Yanks.

As before it seemed as though the demons from below must have burst their bonds and come upon the earth for a sojourn; for surely nothing approaching such a frightful carnival of hideous sounds could ever have been heard before. Every known species of modern missile was brought into play so as to strike terror to the hearts of those staunch marines. For the first time clouds of poison gas were unleashed, and wafted toward the American line, calling for an immediate use of the gas-mask, which every soldier carried ready at his belt.

In this instance, however, the German war god seemed to turn upon his worshippers; for no sooner had the great volume of poison gas been started than there came a sudden shift

of wind that actually turned it back upon those who had originated the cloud. Before they could all be equipped with masks doubtless not a few casualties ensued.

This circumstance must have been noted from the American lines, and very likely would cause considerable satisfaction. Not a few but would see a sign of good luck in it. Everything was turning against the Hun in these days, even the creatures of his own creation; just as the imp of the bottle once freed changed into a fierce giant who turned upon his benefactor, and started to rend him.

Again came those shock troops, meaning to try fresh tactics on the stubborn Yanks, and see if they could not break a passage through. Once more the guns on the American side started in to roar, and as before the first columns of Hun troops found themselves fairly cut to pieces; so that the few survivors were discovered wandering around amidst clouds of sulphurous smoke, bewildered, and hardly knowing which way to turn for safety.

It was simply awful to see how others were thrust forward to suffer a like fate, just as though the High Command had resolved to use up the entire German reserve in the effort to

down these remarkable marines who did not seem to have ever heard of such a word as "retreat."

Throughout that second day the fighting continued brisk, and when again night came, to bring about a cessation of the terrible work, the American line still held. It was no use trying to break it, but doubtless those obstinate Germans would keep on sacrificing their men in hopes that a lucky chance might arise by means of which they could achieve their object.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE REAPPEARANCE OF ANTOINE.

SO days went by.

Where the Germans gained a little ground in one quarter they lost in another, so that things were evened up. Maddier and madder waxed the Hun. It seemed incredible that these young Yankee fighters could hold out against old veterans, and so it would be only for one thing that was in favor of the Americans.

They came into the war well fed, confident, and buoyant. The Germans, while far more experienced in all the methods of modern fighting, had really grown "stale." Besides they were illy nourished, and filled with uncertainties regarding the well-being of their people at home. Despite all efforts to prevent it, rumors of famine and rebellion sifted through, and gave them much uneasiness. Of what avail to win victories in the field, if their families at home were being starved and poorly clothed?

In other words, the Americans struck in just at a time when the morale of the Germans had reached a low ebb. Desertions were numerous, and when a chance came to surrender batches of the Huns voluntarily came in with uplifted hands, and declared they were tired of the war, and wished to get out of it.

Had the newcomers from over the sea met the Huns as they were earlier in the war they might not have had such a glowing account to show for their valor. But that was all a part of the game as played by the astute general who now had complete command over the Allied forces. Foch had taken all that into account when he pitted the marines against Hindenburg's picked troops for a test.

The result convinced him that the end was in sight. It proved how the tired Huns could not stand up against fresh and enthusiastic forces, if only these latter could be found in numbers sufficient to hold a certain part of the long line between Switzerland and the Channel ports.

A week of fighting and more had now gone by.

Both Elmer and Amos still held their places. Comrades had fallen at their side time



and again, and their own escapes were numerous; but it seemed as though some Higher Power screened them from the raging Death.

They had won praise from their watchful commander, and if both lived through the campaign it was likely that their reward would be forthcoming. Elmer had ambitions looking to a lieutenant's commission; while Amos would be satisfied if he were able to sport a sergeant's chevrons on his sleeve.

Belleau Woods now faced them, and here they might expect the fiercest kind of work; for the enemy were said to be heavily posted there. Both sides meant to put up a game fight for possession of the forest, anticipating that it was likely to prove of considerable value to them from a strategic standpoint.

After that would come Chateau Thierry, and then if all went well the routing of the foe from the St. Miguel salient, which they had held for years, despite all desperate efforts of the French to eject them.

During this severe fighting Elmer had not once set eyes on Nellie. He often heard of her doing splendid work at the field hospital. Some of the fellows declared they almost hoped to be wounded so as to be placed in the charge

of the volunteer nurse, and former canteen worker. Elmer had such thoughts himself, though less liable to give utterance to the same. He was not one of the kind to wear his heart on his sleeve.

It chanced, however, that on this particular day he did receive a minor wound, making light of it at the time, and winding a handkerchief about his arm while continuing to keep in line, and do good work.

Captain Fuller had lost many of his men by this time. The company had grown perceptibly smaller and smaller, until there were hardly a hundred able-bodied fighting men left at roll-call. Consequently he noticed how Elmer had something tied about his left arm, though trying to conceal the fact; and demanding to see the nature of his injury immediately commanded him to proceed to the hospital in order to have it attended to.

“And return as often as they tell you to daily, Sergeant Ketcham,” said the old officer. “True, it seems only a trivial wound, but sometimes those are as much to be dreaded as others that seem more serious, and especially when fighting savages, or Germans. You never know what sort of virus that bullet may

have been in contact with; for I wouldn't put anything past some of these Huns, fit descendants of Attila."

Well, Elmer made no complaint; in fact he was chuckling to himself as he headed for the field hospital lying at some distance back of the fighting line. Perhaps if he were lucky he might get a glimpse of pretty Nell; even be able to pass a few remarks with her. He hoped she had not quite forgotten there was such a chap as Elmer Ketcham in the marine corps, owing to the multitudinous duties devolving upon her since she changed her vocation from canteen worker to that of volunteer nurse.

It was well along toward the evening hour.

He suspected they would all be pretty busy, for there had been a voluminous stream of wounded men being taken from the field since hostilities ceased for the day, and others would soon be arriving from more distant dressing stations served by this field hospital.

Just as he suspected the vicinity of the hospital was a bustling place indeed, with the arrival and departure of ambulances, and parties of stretcher-bearers. Elmer almost hated to intrude his minor injury where there was so much suffering of a more serious character;

but accustomed to obeying orders as he had become he knew the captain would expect him to have that slash attended to without fail.

He began to wander about, apparently interested in what he saw, but in reality keeping a sharp lookout for a certain trim little figure that he fancied he would readily recognize, despite the white uniform, and nurse's cap with its red insignia.

Shortly afterwards he felt something grip his heart. Surely that must be Nellie bending over a cot where a wounded marine lay. The poor chap was evidently badly hurt, perhaps expected to die, for the nurse was writing a letter for him, and even as Elmer looked held him up so he could sign his name to it.

Now she was coming toward him with the letter in her hand. He saw that she was powerfully affected by what she had just passed through, and somehow his heart grew more tender than ever after learning how sympathetic Nell Gwynne was. Yes, her brown eyes were glistening with unshed tears when suddenly she came face to face with Elmer.

He could see the start she gave. Then a look of genuine pleasure passed over her face that thrilled him. Out came her little hand

to him, while she was saying in her cooing way:

"How glad I am to see you again, my friend. I have feared for your safety, and have asked after you many times, when some of the boys of your company were brought in for attention."

Elmer felt a warm thrill in the region of his heart when the Red Cross nurse said this. It was pleasant to know that somebody cared whether he was still in the land of the living, when so many brave fellows were daily giving themselves to the grim Moloch of War.

"But I never knew you were a nurse, Miss Nellie," he managed to say, still holding her warm little hand in his firm clasp, a fact she did not appear to notice, or at least seriously object to.

"Oh! yes, I have passed all tests in that line, but thought best to play my part in the Y.M.C.A. canteen, unless an emergency arose, which has happened lately, after the fighting began. I don't know now that I shall ever go back to entertaining enlisted men, and waiting on them, while there is so much greater need of attendants in the field hospitals."

"I heard about you being here from my chum, Amos Flagg," he went on to say.

"But what has brought you to the hospital—oh! you have been wounded, I see now. I hope it isn't serious!" she exclaimed, gently releasing her hand, to lay it caressingly on his left forearm, which he felt constrained to hold up in full view, now that she had discovered his rude bandaging.

"Oh! a mere scratch compared with other fellows' injuries," he told her. "I didn't mean to bother having it looked after, but Captain Fuller insisted. He says some of these minor injuries often become serious if neglected; and that you never can tell what the Boches may do to their bullets before using them, even hinting at *poison*, though I'd hate to think that."

"I'm glad you did come," Nell continued, and hastily adding: "because what the captain said is true. I myself have seen samples of it that could not be disputed. If you would like me to wash your arm, and do the right thing with it, I have a little breathing spell just now, and would feel better to know you were taking no unnecessary chances."



He looked into her brown eyes, and then said:

"I'd be a thousand times obliged, but feel as though I'm trespassing upon your good nature a lot to bother you with such a silly thing as my injury, when there are so many terrible wounds needing attention. Still, I am under orders, and must obey."

So he obediently took off his coat, rolled up his stained sleeve, and soon exposed his forearm. Nellie meanwhile secured a tin basin, with warm water, and the other necessary things. She bathed his arm, examined the spot where the flesh had been torn a little by the passing bullet, applied a liquid to neutralize any possible poison germ, and then added a healing salve.

After that she bound his arm up. Elmer could not help noticing how deft those shapely fingers went about the work. He did not blame those fellows who said they would really not mind being wounded if only they might have such a winsome nurse to wait upon them. Really Elmer enjoyed that five minutes more than he had ever believed possible.

"The captain also told me I should report here every day for the present, so as to have

a little further attention; and as he's a regular stickler for obedience I suppose I'll just have to bother some one for a while."

"It is my job, please remember; you will let me do that little for you, I hope," she told him, turning a trifle red under his ardent gaze.

"I'll wait until you're at liberty every time, believe me," he remarked; "and hope I'll have the good luck to be able to show up each evening after the day's work is done."

"Oh! I shall pray so," she murmured, turning a bit pale as if the bare thought of his failing to appear filled her with sincere concern.

"You have kept well all these long days since last I saw you, have you not, Miss Nellie?"

"Oh! I am blessed with rugged health, though some people might not suspect it, because I happen to be so slightly built," she assured him; "and somehow this life seems to agree with me. But perhaps I ought to tell you something strange that happened."

"Please do, that is, if it is any of my business," he urged, though he felt as if he would be interested in anything that concerned her

welfare; and accordingly appreciated the confidence she seemed about to repose in him.

"It is about—my cousin," she began.

"Do you mean Antoine Maillard?" he asked, his eyebrows going up in a manner to indicate genuine surprise and interest.

"Yes, it is Antoine," she continued. "I remembered what you told me connected with his peculiar disappearance that day when you shot down the airplane in which he was starting to leave for the German lines."

"Yes, and both Amos and myself felt pretty sure he had fallen into the river, and was drowned," Elmer went on to say. "Is it possible you have reason to believe he is still alive? Have you heard from him in any way, Miss Nellie?"

"It is stronger evidence than that; I have seen him!" she explained.

"Here in the hospital, do you mean?" Elmer asked.

"Yes, and only last night," came the startling answer.

"Then he was wounded, perhaps?" suggested the sergeant.

"No, not that I could see," the nurse was saying. "He had taken upon himself the dif-

ficult duties of a stretcher-bearer, and wore a red cross on the left sleeve of his khaki coat. With another man he brought in a lieutenant badly injured. It was just by sheer accident I had a good look at his face, though he immediately turned away, and hurried off with his companion, after another case from the field dressing station. But I am as sure it was my cousin as of anything that has ever happened to me."

Elmer felt a chilly sensation in the region of his heart. That same Antoine was bobbing up so often in his life that he began to believe the other must be his evil genius.

What could have tempted him to again enter the American lines, where his life would quickly pay the penalty of discovery? Could it be devotion to the cause of Germany; or was there another reason? Was he determined to secure the secret connected with that hidden treasure-trove? There was one other motive that might influence him to risk everything; and Elmer shivered at the thought of pretty Nellie Gwynne being the magnet!

## CHAPTER XVI.

## PLACED IN COMMAND.

SEVERAL more days passed.

Despite the fact that thye were always in the thick of the fight, some kind Providence seemed to hover over the two chums. Neither of them had as yet been even seriously wounded, though their escapes were numerous, as well as most thrilling.

Elmer proved to be an obedient soldier; at least he faithfully carried out the orders of his captain with regard to visiting the field hospital each evening so as to have the dressing of his trifling wound renewed. He admitted to himself that it was pretty much of a bare-faced fraud, and that he ought to feel ashamed of being so careful regarding such a little hurt.

Perhaps Nellie herself was mostly to blame, for did she not make him promise to report on each successive evening, so that her self-assumed duty might be carried on? She once admitted to him blushing, when he had the nerve to expostulate, that one of her ob-

jects in so doing was to be assured of his continued safety; and that confession afforded Elmer wonderful comfort all the next day, when danger and he were close companions.

He always asked her if she had seen Antoine again, and felt a bit easier when Nellie told him such a thing had not happened. Nevertheless he never thought of Maillard without a sense of uneasiness, not on account of himself, or any evil that might befall him, but because of her. That man had better be careful how he plotted against the pretty nurse. Elmer always gritted his teeth savagely when saying this to himself. It were better Antoine had a mill-stone hung about his neck, and were cast into the sea, rather than annoy his cousin.

They were now battling in Belleau Wood, and it was the 17th of June.

Long will that action be remembered by those marines fortunate enough to come back from the gory fields of France, on which so many of their gallant comrades laid down their young lives.

The Germans had received enormous reinforcements, apparently, for on this day they put up an extraordinarily strong fight; and it



proved to be one of the few occasions when the Yanks were pushed back.

There was no precipitate flight in the least degree, or anything approaching a panic. Greatly outnumbered, the marines sullenly gave way, here a little, and perhaps again on the right or left flank. Every rod of ground was surrendered with a bad grace, as though they begrudged having to admit even a temporary set-back. And among themselves those fellows in the blue uniforms were promising that they would come back again on the morrow, and make the Boche yield what he had been enabled to win that day at terrible cost.

Captain Fuller's sadly decimated company was in the thickest of the fighting, and again great gaps had been torn in the ranks. At this rate there would soon be little left of the organization. At any time now they were likely to be ordered to the rear, for building up, and a rest, which latter they had certainly richly earned.

So the afternoon waned, and evening drew on apace.

The Americans still held the exultant enemy at bay, and every now and then a fresh outburst of firing and yelling told how a new

engagement was on tap. There would be furious firing, and many fresh casualties, principally among the attacking Teutons; then the Yanks would slowly withdraw to a new position, and await further developments.

Belleau Woods had not been taken as yet, but those marines had the reputation of always completing any task to which they set their hands, a fact Heine may never have known, but which he was certainly learning fast. The tide might be ebbing now, but with another day it would come on with the flood, and sweep the dazed Huns back still further.

As the shades of coming night began to fall the fighting stopped altogether.

Of course the Yanks did not trust their enemies, and would keep up a continuous watch until morning; but the chances were Fritz was as glad of a chance to rest, and secure something in the way of food, as any Sammy in the bunch.

The marines gathered in knots to talk over the exciting happenings of the day just ended, comparing notes as to their experiences. Thrilling stories were as plentiful as blackberries in July, for everybody had passed through numerous adventures of a character

that would make the reputation of any war correspondent who got hold of them, since they were of that type seldom seen in print.

Elmer and Amos were together of course. They somehow managed to keep in touch throughout most of the day's fighting, and found more or less comfort in such association. On this particular day it happened that they had seen a number of distressing sights that were apt to weigh upon their spirits. Comrades had been shot down at their sides, and on three separate occasions had they been compelled to carry severely wounded boys back to where they could be taken care of by such attendants as happened to be near.

Others less fortunate had been killed outright. Never would the comrades forget the horrors of Belleau Woods. They too felt angry because ground had to be surrendered, each rod of which they had won at severe cost on the preceding day.

"But there's another day coming, don't forget, Amos," Elmer was saying, grimly, as he munched a piece of stale bread carried in his pocket, for thus far nothing in the shape of food had reached them since operations began in the morning.

"Yes," observed the other, "and we'll be getting a batch of reinforcements before then, I understand, so we'll be in some sort of decent shape again to give Heine a push off the map."

"None for our company, though," mourned Elmer. "I guess we're the worst punished bunch in the whole corps. Why, there are hardly fifty men left able to shoulder a gun, and some of those are wounded so badly they ought to be back in the hospital; but you couldn't chase them there with a Big Bertha howitzer, they want to get a kick at the Huns so much—just savage for more punishment, in fact."

"Our officers have been picked off too, so that outside of that little dude lieutenant, and Captain Fuller himself, there isn't one above your rank, Elmer. If anything happened to that pair I guess it'd be up to you to handle the remnant of Company G."

Elmer's eyes flashed at the very thought, since it is always pleasant for a top sergeant to contemplate having a chance to command.

"I guess I could do it all right," he said, quietly, "but all the same I hope the chance won't come my way; for I'd just hate to know

anything had happened to Captain Fuller. He's a man, every inch of him; and no member of the company but who would think it an honor to go through fire and water for him."

"Wonder if we're going to get any grub tonight," grumbled Amos, for he was furiously hungry, and the snack of dry bread had only sharpened his appetite, as it were.

"Oh! yes, in good time they'll get it along to us," his companion cheered him by saying confidently. "The cook has stood by us loyally, and is doing the best he can. It's a tough job feeding fighting men through a battle that has already lasted some two full weeks, every day in a different place. I haven't had a chance to see Nellie now for some time. But then I was getting a whole lot ashamed of making such a mountain out of a mole-hill; because my wound has healed like magic."

"Yes, they say Nellie is simply wonderful in handling all sorts of cuts and bruises," mentioned Amos, with a chuckle, that, however, his chum pretended not to notice.

"I hear voices over yonder, and I do believe the chow men are coming along!" Elmer exclaimed just then; so that in the new anticipation Amos forgot entirely about the pretty

nurse, and his comrade's patent interest in her.

It proved to be no false alarm, and they soon found themselves supplied with a nourishing and warm meal; which, thanks to the ample preparations made, could be dealt out to every man along the firing line. When this had been disposed of, they felt just a "hundred per cent better," as Amos admitted.

"Nothing like chow to put fresh vim in a tired fellow," he observed, as he finished his last bite. "I'm so much revived that I believe I could go out and give Fritz another scramble right now, if necessary."

"Enough's as good as a feast, Amos, so don't be greedy. You'll likely get all the scraping you want tomorrow; unless what I fear happens," ventured Elmer.

"What's that?" demanded the other suspiciously.

"That our company is withdrawn, and sent to the rear to recruit to standard strength again, or be united with other companies," explained the other. "I'd hate to have to be shut out until Belleau Woods has been taken entirely."

Amos looked alarmed.

"Oh! I hope it isn't going to come to that



just yet," he mumbled; "though for that matter I guess we need a rest, and a heap of reinforcing. A few of the boys come dribbling back each day, having been wounded slightly; but the gaps are getting something fierce. Still, this business grows on a fellow, and I'd hate to think we were laid on the shelf so soon."

"We've done our share of the scrapping up to now," said Elmer, soberly; and indeed Company G had certainly inscribed its number on the scroll of fame through terrible losses, and its bulldog determination never to let go, once it had taken hold.

"Have you noticed our captain lately?" asked Amos, suddenly.

"I saw him along about three o'clock, or it may have been later than that," Elmer told him. "He was setting a couple of the boys with a machine-gun in a nest of bushes, to give Heine a surprise when he strolled along that way. Then he hurried off as if on other business; and come to think of it, I haven't laid eyes on him up to now."

"Same here," continued the other, his brows knit as with a growing sense of anxiety.

"I sure hope nothing has happened to Cap-

tain Fuller," Elmer was saying, showing signs of increasing concern. "He's a royal good fellow, and as much thought of as any officer in the whole corps."

"Huh! bad enough to have the blooming company all shot to pieces," Amos growled, "without losing our commander. I'd like to know Captain Fuller personally, out of the army. Say, I bet he could make your blood dance with a whole lot of thrilling yarns connected with his past experiences."

"Well, he's been in the marines for a good many years, and they say has taken part in most of the rousing affairs they've handled ever since that Boxer uprising in China, and the fight for the legations at Peking. That was where he won his promotion as a second lieutenant from a private's berth. They say he performed some wonderful feat of bravery that was written up in all the newspapers; and Washington just *had* to boost him up into the commissioned ranks."

"Here comes one of our boys to report something to you, Elmer," Amos hastily announced. "I hope it isn't any bad news he's fetching along with him."

Both scrambled to their feet as a man in a

soiled uniform of the marines came up. He made a respectful salute that struck Amos as unusually profound. Indeed, it is possible he sensed the import of the newcomer's errand before he had spoken a single word.

"Corporal Jones ordered me to report to you, Sergeant," was what fell from the other's lips. "He wants to inform you that what is left of Company G is under your charge, and that he expects to take his orders from you from now on."

"What has happened to Captain Fuller, and Lieutenant Belasco?" demanded Elmer, his voice showing just the least sign of a tremor at the unexpected honor thus conferred upon him, for he knew only too well what it portended.

"Lieutenant is down and out, sir; and the captain, I'm sorry to say, was left badly wounded on the field. Two of the boys tried to carry him in, but they were so weak themselves from loss of blood that they could hardly stagger along, and so had to abandon the commander there."

"When was this, O'Toole?" demanded Elmer, getting a firm grip on himself since he

chanced to be a fellow who could rise to an occasion.

“An hour before we quit fighting, sir.”

“Any idea how far back the captain would be lying if the enemy didn’t take a notion to carry him off?” continued Elmer; and Amos knew somehow that already some sort of desperate scheme was forming in his chum’s brain.

“Should say it might be all of a quarter of a mile, sir, perhaps a sight more,” came the answer.

That quarter of a mile would now be in the possession of the enemy. Huns would very likely be thronging over most of the ground which the Yanks had been forced to so reluctantly yield that sanguinary afternoon.

“And do you believe the exact spot could be found, O’Toole?”

“I asked one of the poor chaps, and he described the same to me, so I do believe I could lead ye straight to it, sir,” said the other, firmly, showing signs of satisfaction.

“Then first we’ll get a bunch of the boys together, and then go back,” announced Elmer; “for living or dead, our captain must be found!”

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE RESCUE PARTY.

**I**T'S delighted I am, sir, to hear ye say that," announced the messenger. "I've been with Captain Fuller six years, and a better, kinder commander never the marines knew. It's through fire and blood I'd wade to save his life. That's me, Lawrence O'Toole, sir, beggin' your pardon for bein' so bold."

"All right, O'Toole, you'll have a chance to do a little of the same," snapped the top-sergeant. "Do you know if the chow man has been around your way?"

"Indeed and he has, sir, and we're all feelin' mighty trim once again."

"Then lead us to the squad where Corporal Jones has them halted for the night. If we can collect a baker's dozen of just such fellows as you we'll kick up a shindy among the Boches they'll not soon forget."

"I reckon, Sergeant, it will be easy enough to get the men," said the other, confidently. "They'll be burnin' with eagerness, so they

will, to go back and knock over a few more Huns. Say the word, sir, and I'll lead ye to the lot."

"Go to it then, O'Toole," ordered the commander of Company G.

Amos wondered at the natural manner in which his chum took upon himself the honors connected with his novel position. It was just as though Elmer had prepared himself for the change, and now stepped into his new rôle as one to the manner born. He also felt that those who chanced to serve under the sergeant would quickly learn to estimate him at his true worth, and be proud to harken to his instructions or orders.

O'Toole hurried off. One would never imagine that those marines had been engaged in desperate work ever since sun-up, to see how they covered the ground. Perhaps the food had put fresh life in their wearied frames; or it might be the prospect of warm and exciting work just ahead inspired them with new grit.

Shortly afterwards the trio came to where dark figures seemed to be sprawled out upon the ground. These were the remnants of the gallant command that threatened to carry off the chief honors for having lost the largest



ratio of officers and men of any company in General Bartlett's whole corps.

When Elmer and Amos and the guide came along the men scrambled to their feet. Corporal Jones was saluting the sergeant now as his commanding officer; for the rules of the war game had actually brought about this strange condition.

"We are looking to you, Sergeant Ketcham, for orders," he hastened to announce. "All our officers are now gone, sir, and the command now devolves on you. Did O'Toole tell you that Captain Fuller had to be abandoned late this afternoon?"

"Yes, but I can't understand how those two men could find the heart to do it, so long as they were able to put one foot before the other," replied the other, really seeking a little more light on the subject.

"They were nearly broken-hearted when they came in, covered with blood and dirt," explained the corporal. "Both swore they would never be able to forgive themselves; but that the captain commanded them to leave him; and even swore he would shoot them down if they dared refuse to obey him. He said they could never get in trying to carry

him; and there was no need of three being sacrificed. It was Captain Fuller's way, sir, you understand; always thinking of the other fellow, and not himself."

"Well, we're going back and see if we can't get him," asserted Elmer, with a dogged ring to his voice that caused a low murmur of satisfaction to rise from the eight or nine men clustered around; who started at once picking up their guns as if ready for business at a word.

"Glad to hear you say that, Sergeant; hope you'll let every man of us who's fit to march accompany you," hinted the corporal.

"Get them together, and be sure no one weakened by wounds is in the bunch. We start in five minutes," said Elmer.

It was almost ludicrous to see how eager the men were to prove themselves in condition for the strenuous task which now confronted them. There was a strong likelihood that few of them might ever come back, for that portion of Belleau Woods was swarming with Huns; but instead of discouraging them this condition of affairs only seemed to inspire greater ambition.

One man was found to be unfit by reason of

physical disability, but he tried to argue the matter with the corporal until the other had to actually threaten him with punishment if he did not cease his mutterings of discontent. Poor chap, it was indeed hard on him to see all his comrades starting off on a fresh crusade on the field where glory or death awaited them, and himself be forced to remain behind just because he had happened to lose a little more blood than any of the rest.

When the company had been mustered it was found they numbered just twelve, exclusive of the two corporals and the top sergeant, now the company commander. Fifteen Yanks meaning to walk deliberately back and defy a thousand Huns who now occupied that part of the woods! It was a bold undertaking, and could only succeed through great good fortune, aided by the fact that of course Fritz would never be expecting any manoeuvre of this sort.

So they started.

The veteran O'Toole was given the place of honor at the head of the little band, because he must serve as guide to the expedition. Just back of him came Elmer, with the pair of corporals flanking him; and then the rest of the

company followed by twos and threes, every man grim and determined, beset with fears only for the fate of his beloved captain, and not at all concerning his own personal safety.

It might have looked like a forlorn hope to any unprejudiced person; and yet he could not have helped admiring the astonishing courage that urged this little company of tired fighters to venture once again into the jaws of the trap from which they had just managed to escape.

After all the clamor of the day's fierce fighting the woods seemed fairly quiet. Doubtless bodies of the foe were marching to take up fresh positions, so as to be in readiness for the battle of the succeeding day, and of course the Americans were also maneuvering with the idea of recovering the lost ground by means of brilliant dashes, and unswerving "push."

Now and then in the start they could see moving lights amidst the recesses of the forest near by. These they knew were lanterns carried by the stretcher-bearers, seeking out the poor chaps who had fallen badly wounded, so that they might be borne to the rear and looked after.

A certain amount of allowance was made

on either side for this work of mercy; though the Huns had been known to fire upon just such harmless parties of Red Cross attendants; and afterwards claim that they fancied they constituted a column of troops trying to surprise the Germans.

Once they heard low moans proceeding from a thicket close by, where some badly injured man was lying, he hoping thus to attract attention, and receive help. He must have guessed that they were passing him by, for he called out feebly. It gave Elmer a bad feeling to realize how he could do nothing for the other; but there was a flickering light not far away, and possibly the continued groans might attract searchers to the spot.

As for them they were enlisted in a more important business just then than trying to fetch out an ordinary private; until the fate of Captain Fuller had been fully established they must not allow their attention to be distracted by any minor matter.

O'Toole led them as one who felt a fair degree of confidence in his ability as a guide. It was not long before they realized that they were passing within the German advanced positions. Indeed, twice now they had heard

heavy guttural voices calling, first on one flank, and then on the other.

Once let the Huns suspect their presence and they would have their hands full in repelling such insistent attacks as would be made. On this account then Elmer meant to keep their errand as much a secret as seemed possible. If the worst happened the remnant of Company G could stand with their backs to the wall, and go down fighting; but before the last man expired there would surely be a rampart of dead Huns surrounding their position, provided their ammunition held out.

Several times O'Toole whispered something to the sergeant who would give the signal agreed on bringing about a temporary halt. This stoppage was necessary to enable the guide to make sure he was heading aright. The gloom under the trees, while benefiting them in some ways, also added to the difficulties placed on the shoulders of O'Toole.

By degrees the peril increased.

They could now hear the Huns calling out to one another from every quarter of the compass, it seemed. Some were even singing their folk songs after the fashion of a people musically inclined. It was certainly a queer po-



sition to be in, and quite enough to keep the blood of Amos leaping through his veins with excitement.

"Are we nearly there, O'Toole?" whispered the sergeant at one time.

They had certainly come more than a quarter of a mile since starting, Elmer imagined. He found himself bothered some by the possibility of the guide having erred, so that after all they would have undertaken the job without any chance of succeeding.

"I do believe we are that, sir," came the low-spoken reply; "and by the same token we ought to know inside of another five minutes. I'm in a sweat for fear we find the dear captain a dead man, that's what I am."

The forward movement was continued. Those determined would-be rescuers, having made up their minds and started forth, would have grimly kept wading deeper into the German lines for a full hour longer if the sergeant only led them.

Suddenly O'Toole stopped short.

Those coming in his rear doubtless gripped their guns more firmly than before, under the impression that perhaps a party of Huns was bearing down upon them, and a tussle immi-

nent. But there was no crashing of the bushes, no deep-toned cries that told of angry men ready to hurl themselves in attack upon the audacious little company.

Instead they heard O'Toole saying softly:

"Captain, dear, are ye near this spot by the same token?"

There was no answer.

The guide tried a second time, now raising his voice a little, so that it might reach further into the gloom beyond.

"Captain Fuller! are ye prisent? Sure we've come back after ye, so we have. Speak up and let us hear ye, please."

"Is that you, O'Toole?" came in a weak voice that thrilled them all.

"Yes, yes, so it is, Captain dear!" cried the old campaigner in an excess of delight, at the same time commencing to move in the direction from whence the hail had come.

In a little thicket they found him. He had undoubtedly dragged himself there as if to try and remain unseen by the passing Boches. Captain Fuller detested the Germans most cordially, and believed in almost all the dreadful stories he had heard concerning their cruelty and treachery. Consequently he preferred

concealing himself, and perhaps dying from neglect, to trusting to their humanitarian spirit. It reminded Elmer of the habit of the lion, king of beasts, which being fatally injured, always endeavors to hide from his kind, and meet the coming death alone.

Elmer was quickly bending over his injured commander, and making anxious inquiries concerning his condition. Such rude assistance as could be applied in the dark was rendered. It might assist in keeping the breath of life in the exhausted officer until they could carry him to the American lines, and get him to an operating table in the field hospital.

There was no lack of willing hands offered to convey Captain Fuller back to safety. Four sturdy fellows made a seat with their clasped hands, and raised him tenderly from the ground. No doubt the motion would rack him considerably, but never a single groan would any of them hear well from those tightly compressed lips. The veteran captain was built on the order of those stoical Indians capable of jibing their enemies, even while being burned at the stake.

Elmer hastily formed a guarding circle around the helpless captain. Nearly a full

dozen were thus free to fight should such a thing be necessary. In this fashion then did they start retracing their way. O'Toole still acted as guide, for the successful way in which he had led them along thus far induced the utmost confidence in his further ability to take them out of the tiger's jaws.

For a short time all went well.

They heard those warning voices almost continually all about them, keeping up the continuous excitement, and possibility of discovery, but luck seemed to continue favoring them.

It was fated not to last through to the end, and the night expedition of mercy could not be carried out without a desperate struggle. When something like ten minutes had passed they heard a loud crunching of many feet on the right that seemed to be coming directly toward them. As it was impossible to hasten their progress while carrying the sorely wounded man, all they could do was to crouch there in readiness, while hoping the Boche detachment might pass by without discovering their presence.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## IN BELLEAU WOOD.

THERE came a single shot, the flame cutting the darkness like a knife-blade. Elmer himself had fired, realizing that in another minute the whole Hun detachment would have stumbled upon them, since they were heading directly toward the crouching Yanks.

That was the signal for which the other marines had been waiting. Immediately there burst out a ringing volley that must have startled the Germans. Loud outcries broke forth, and men could be heard running recklessly through the woods. There came also groans to tell of the desperately wounded, as well as a few scattering shots in return.

Elmer gave his orders in a low but distinct tone, and the little company turning aside proceeded to flank the spot where the Huns had been surprised.

From every quarter could be heard signs that told of awakening excitement. Perhaps

it was even more than half suspected that those impudent Yanks were trying a night surprise attack, which must be thrown back, even though many battalions had to be mobilized on the spot, and hurled into action.

It must be doubly difficult now for the little company of rescuers to extricate themselves from the trap, since the enemy had become aware of their presence, and would be on his guard. From every quarter the Huns were doubtless hurrying to the spot, eager to make a surround, and annihilate the daring Americans.

Five minutes later and again did they become aware of the fact that their further progress was cut off by a body of Prussians. Shots were fired, and the bullets crashed through the bushes close by, one of the men being actually wounded in the leg, though not severely.

This called for further rifle practice on the part of Elmer's squad. It was no longer possible for him to control their shooting, since the fight had become a matter of "every man for himself." So there were incessant reports as one or another believed he saw moving figures. These called for return shots, and by degrees things grew very warm.



Elmer realized that they were at a great disadvantage in this style of warfare, since the Huns could keep it up indefinitely, and cut them down one at a time. There was also a strong probability, too, that the ammunition of the Yanks would soon give out, when they must find themselves at the mercy of the enemy.

Something else must be attempted if they still hoped to escape from the trap. There was only one way in which that might be accomplished. If only they could again flank the position of the Huns all might yet be well.

So orders were given, and although yet under fire they started off. Of course while this movement was in progress it was deemed wise not to reply to the tantalizing shots of the enemy. Their numbers had been augmented until they must by this time many times outmatch the Yanks, so that should it come to a hand-to-hand conflict the affair would partake too much of a massacre to satisfy Elmer.

Fortune seemed kind, for a time at least, as they actually managed to pass around the battling Boches, and were well on the way to the south. Perhaps Fritz would be apt to grow suspicious when there came no return

fire; and guessing the truth start a pursuit, meanwhile starting a hue and cry that would create still further excitement.

This proved to be the case, for by degrees moving lights converged ahead of the little column until loud cries announced that they had once more been discovered.

Fiercer grew the fighting.

Some of the Huns rushing forward hurled themselves on the Americans, but immediately rued the act, for those terrible bayonets darted in and out as though they might be singular shuttles weaving a pattern; and always there were victims a plenty to tell the story of the marines' expertness with the cold steel.

Yet another chance did the Americans find to push forward, gaining quite some ground this time; but as before they were once more found, and the battle renewed. Elmer himself had led in the fighting, setting his men an example that egged them on, though none seemed inclined to lag when so much was at stake.

They now counted just twelve, exclusive of the captain, three having fallen, though whether they yet lived, or had yielded up their all in the good cause, might never be known.

There was no thought of surrendering. The

marines had abolished that word from their lexicon, it seemed, and would have none of it; which fact possibly accounted for many of the brilliant exploits laid at their door.

Through it all none of the flying bullets had reached the man who was being carried on the crossed hands of the quartette of bearers, a fact Elmer noted with considerable satisfaction. If they could only manage so as to successfully negotiate the affair to the conclusion they aimed to achieve, even the heavy toll taken would not be too much for having their beloved commander back again, perhaps to survive his wounds, and at some later date return to lead them once more to eventual victory on the Rhine.

The next time the Huns managed to head them off proved to be the most severe test of all, for they seemed bent on making it a final rally. The Yanks used their guns to advantage, and brought numbers down, but the supply seemed inexhaustible; for when one German plunged forward two were ready to take his place. The flash of the guns, almost continuous at times, dispelled the darkness to such a degree that no doubt the real meaning of this daring raid into their lines became

apparent to those who saw how one of the Yanks, evidently an officer, was being carefully handled by the others.

Still that knowledge did not cause the assailants to relax any of the vigor of their drive. The loss of so many of their mates must have angered them to such an extent that the thought of showing mercy to the men from over-seas did not enter into the calculations of any Boche.

It was a game of kill or be killed, and the opposing armies had been playing it now ever since those marines first came up against the lines of the enemy. Germany had evidently begun to see the "handwriting on the wall," and realize that when the unrestricted submarine warfare brought America into the war, with her unlimited resources in men, munitions, and food supplies, and every soldier animated by the loftiest impulses of pure patriotism, the Teuton sun had commenced to set. That growing belief was already making them very bitter against the Yanks, as a proud military Nation is apt to feel with respect to those by whom she is fated to be deeply humiliated.

Numbers of terrific hand-to-hand fights developed, with varying results, though in most

cases it was the sturdy marine who managed to come out first-best in those tragical affairs. Such intensive fighting was just what suited the natures of the Yanks; while the Huns excelled in using mechanical devices of all kinds, such as bombs dropped from airplanes, poison gas loosed in the camps and towns occupied by the troops of the Allies and America; monstrous guns that could send enormous shells scores of miles, thus bombarding Paris from a point sixty miles away; and all manner of similar wonderful inventions.

In the end the Yanks broke through the barrier, and again started for their own lines. The Boche ascertaining just what had happened set out to again intervene so as to prevent such a coalition. Elmer guessing their intention doubled on his tracks in the darkness of the wood, bringing into play an old Indian trick with which he was familiar.

Singular to state it actually succeeded, so that they gave the noisy throng of searchers the slip, and were well on their way before the cheat was discovered, and the hunt once more on.

By this time they had drawn near the line of demarcation which stood for No-Man's-

Land, lying between the advanced posts of the Germans and those of the sorely pressed marines, hoping for reinforcements, but ready to fight on just the same if even a single man failed to come along.

The intensity of the situation grew more and more acute, for there was a possibility looming up that some lurking band of Yanks might suddenly decide to enter the game with a hurrah. Elmer did not want to have his little detachment fired into by friends, and yet how to avoid it without betraying their present position to the eager enemy, was a problem difficult of solution.

Hardly a man among them but who could boast of some sort of fresh wound. Some were even dangerously injured, yet they ventured to make light of everything, merely tying a handkerchief around an arm or leg to help stop the loss of precious blood, and then going on with their work as though the taking of human life had become a regular trade with them, as with the grim executioner.

Sergeant Ketcham was inclined to believe that the last attack lacked something in fierceness and point of excessive numbers. This could not come on account of their having



downed so many of the enemy as to reduce his fighting equipment; so he reached the conclusion that their morale must be affected.

Their lack of complete success in capturing or cleaning up the small force with which they had been so furiously engaged was getting on the nerves of the dispirited Germans. Then again they must of a certainty realize that they were now at the "jumping-off" place, and likely to run into an ambushade at any minute. The respect they entertained for those once despised American marines caused them to view such a happening with considerable uneasiness. These wonderful inventive Yankees always seemed to be getting up such amazing surprises that they were loth to make targets of themselves for the launching of a novel surprise.

"One more rush, and we'll get there, boys!" Sergeant Ketcham was saying encouragingly, though himself panting for breath after a lively encounter with an unusually determined Boche who would not accept ordinary defeat, but fought on until Elmer managed to hurl him aside with his bayonet, and clear the way to a further retreat.

Taken in all it had been a wonderfully suc-

cessful retirement, after accomplishing the object for which their services were enlisted. Captain Fuller had retained his senses through it all, and from time to time encouraged the brave fellows who had risked their lives in his personal service, a fact he could never forget.

There came a final rush of the Huns, another dreadful commingling of the rival forces, and a series of desperate close-in fights. Each marine awoke to the necessity of doing his best in order to win the laurels of success. Even the four who had been carrying the wounded man felt that it was absolutely essential for them to place him gently on the ground, and join in the *mêlée*.

Even then it seemed as though the odds were too great, and that they were doomed to be overwhelmed; but just in the nick of time loud cheers were heard close at hand, and this seemed to be the last straw on the camel's back to the Huns. They began to slip away until finally none remained save the wounded and the dead on the scene of the engagement.

There was fighting going on in the wood close by, where the newcomers seemed to have cornered a pack of Huns, and were bent on

wiping them off the face of the earth. This, however, was now none of their business, Elmer considered, since the marines were able to take care of themselves. Of course he would always feel grateful for the assistance, since it must have gone hard with his sadly decimated little force only for the fortunate arrival of the others; but just then they must make haste to take advantage of the enemy's attention being directed to another quarter, and "make hay while the sun shone."

So Elmer withdrew his command, and in the end Captain Fuller was sent back to the nearest field hospital. Elmer had the proud privilege of holding the hand of his beloved commander just before the stretcher men took him away, and of hearing him say in a weak but admiring tone of voice:

"I'm glad it was you who came, Ketcham. I understand that you are in charge of what is left of my poor company. It could not be in better hands. I'm badly battered myself, but it's hard to kill such a tough old campaigner as Cap. Fuller; and I hope to live long enough to see you filling the shoes of a commissioned officer. The first thing I do when they let me will be to send in a report of your

gallant action. Keep the register of the brave chaps who accompanied you on this dare-devil excursion into the enemy's lines; as every man of them must be cited for gallantry, if it is the last act of my life. Goodbye, and God bless you, Elmer! I sometimes believe my son would have been just like you if he had been spared to see this day when his country has need of fearless young men. I could pay you no greater compliment than by saying that. Some think I've always been a bachelor, but it is not the truth; though I have no one left to me now."

Often did Elmer think of what Captain Fuller had said. Sincerely did he hope the old fighter of the marine corps would survive his serious wounds—not because of what he had said he meant to do with regard to recommending the promotion of Elmer, but through genuine affection for the other. He hoped he should some day, when the war was over, come to meet the veteran on a level footing, and not as a commanding officer meets his men; for he fancied the life of Captain Fuller must be one long story of adventure, to which he would dearly love to sit and listen.

So the desperate enterprise, started on the

spur of the moment, with the intention of bringing back the missing officer, dead or alive, wound up in a blaze of glory; but only nine men answered roll-call after their return, the other six having been cut down, and left in the gloomy depths of Belleau Woods.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## GOOD OLD COMPANY G.

WELL, it's come, Amos!" announced Elmer, with a long face, on the very next morning after that wonderful night adventure in Belleau Wood, when the remnant of gallant Company G struck back into the enemy country, and plucked their wounded captain out of danger, getting him safely into the American lines.

"What has?" demanded the other, looking worried immediately, and almost instantly adding: "Have you had a letter from home, Elmer?"

"Not for ages, but we're knocked out of the fighting, for a while anyhow!" replied the other, shaking his head as though he had just received a heavy blow that quite unmanned him.

"Ordered off the firing line, then, are we?" questioned the corporal, equally hard hit it seemed.



"Yes, I just received instructions to take what little there was left of our company, and fall back to the rear to a position where there are several other commands just about as badly off. I wouldn't be surprised if they meant to amalgamate the broken units, and make a fresh complete company of them."

Amos brightened up just a fraction on hearing this said.

"Well, now, that wouldn't be quite as bad as trying to fill up our ranks with fresh arrivals from the relay stations further back near Paris. Why, it ought to be easy enough to reorganize one complete company out of the fag-ends of several; and all hard fighters in the bargain. Let's hope it can be carried out in short order, and then we'll be back here again before they get out of Belleau Wood."

"I suppose it's really the most sensible thing to do, though I hate to feel like a dog running away with his tail between his hind-legs," said the top-sergeant. "But there's such a scanty number to answer at roll-call it seems a howling farce to call the list off. Ten absentees to one present. We're all shot to pieces, and not worth counting even as a skeleton company."

"Too bad you couldn't have had just one full try as company commander, Elmer," Amos went on to say, sympathetically.

"Oh! that's a small matter," scoffed the other. "Some fine day I hope it will come along when I'm really something of more consequence than just a top-sergeant. It's all right for a non-com to take charge of a company when all the officers are down and out, for that day and occasion; but to have charge of it in cold blood later doesn't seem to fit in. So I'm relieved, after a fashion."

"Huh! hope we get a decent captain, that's all," grunted Amos, remembering no doubt his previous experience in that line with anything but pleasure.

"Mustn't set your anticipations too high," warned the other, "or you'll come a cropper. Men like Captain Fuller are not to be run across every day in the week. But go out and round up every man left to us. Then we'll form, and march to the rear. Glad to know we still have the old flag, even if it was cut almost into ribbons by the hail of shrapnel that killed the color-bearer three days ago."

"I hope to proudly march back of that same flag when we have our review before

Pershing, and perhaps through the streets of New York on our return. And people who have read the story of how Company G lost nine-tenths of its men during twenty days of fighting will lift their hats in homage as Old Glory in ribbons goes past. It's a pretty decent record, Elmer."

"None better, I'm thinking. But it's time we got a move on, Corporal Flagg. Fetch up the men, even such as are wounded slightly; we're bound to the rear, to give some lucky company their chance to hit the Boche. We've taken our little toll from Heine, and oughtn't to be too greedy, remember."

Amos was compelled to grin on hearing the other say this, which managed to take away some of the sting that announcement of retirement had caused.

"We're not taking water," he blustered; "and it's an honorable falling back, I'd call it. Just as soon as we've recovered our breath again, and filled in some of the gaps, look for us again up front. We may not be known as Company G; and there will be strange officers at the head; but I know a dozen or two of the bully boys who've been our comrades all

through the fighting will be in the bunch, to sort of leaven the dough."

So they fell back.

Some of the marine squads already commencing the work of the day by making a forward push in searching out the enemy gave a cheer. Words were not needed to explain why that dilapidated bunch was retiring. The story of what all that was left of Company G had attempted and carried out on the preceding night was history by this time, having passed from lip to lip; and they did well to honor the melancholy remnant of the organization. True valor is always understood, as well as properly appreciated among fighting men; who themselves know what it means to sacrifice all in pursuit of victory.

When later on that morning Elmer brought his detachment to the place of reorganization he found a number of other skeleton commands also in the same fix. It would appear from this that Company G did not possess a monopoly of the honors of the Belleau Wood campaign; there were others equally gallant, and who would deserve mention in history as having brought glory to their commanders and remaining men.

Here they were to rest up and recruit. Some sort of combination would doubtless soon be found acceptable, such officers as survived being engrafted upon the new company, and making it a full unit, capable of taking a place in the line to assist in flinging Fritz from the wood, and chasing him back into Chateau Thierry.

One of the first things shrewd Elmer learned was that they were near a field hospital. He immediately began planning how he might manage to pay a visit to the same without appearing too anxious. Somewhat to his amusement, as well as consternation, it was Amos who shrewdly read the signs aright, and put him in possession of a clever point or tip.

"I guess now, Sergeant, they've taken our captain to the hospital; and before long it'll be known whether he's going to get well, or go under. I'd like to find out that fact as soon as possible. Do you think one of us could get leave to pay a hurry call there, and learn what's doing?"

Elmer noted the sly look, and understood. Amos was giving him the first chance to seize the opportunity. If Nellie happened to be still playing the rôle of Red Cross nurse she was

apt to be found there at the hospital, which was without a rival for a number of miles on the American sector.

“Thank you for the hint, Amos,” he chuckled; “I was just thinking about Captain Fuller, and wondering what sort of excuse I could hatch up to visit the hospital, since none of my hurts are serious enough to bother with. See you later, whether I’m lucky enough to get permission or not.”

Apparently he did secure what he sought. At least Amos judged so because he saw nothing more of his comrade for several hours. When late that afternoon Elmer once more made his appearance he looked radiantly happy.

“I warrant now you’ll not be quite so crazy as you were to be ordered up front in a hurry,” laughed Amos, reading the signs aright.

“Glad to report that the captain seems to be getting on very well,” said the top-sergeant, with a nod; “in fact, the surgeon as much as assured me he was certain to get well, barring complications. As for the gentleman himself, he’s still of the opinion that a Fuller



is too tough a mortal for any ordinary injury to wipe out."

"Anybody else you chanced to know in the field hospital?" asked Amos, casually.

"Oh! yes, several of the boys are there," admitted Elmer.

"How about the girls, if you'll excuse me for asking?" continued the other, smiling wickedly.

"I'm not telling all I happen to know," protested the top sergeant, loftily; "don't have to, you see. Some things are meant only for two people; three makes a crowd. But you can guess as well as not."

"I'd be as blind as a badger if I couldn't read the signs rightly," jeered Amos, "for you certainly look as satisfied as they make them. I hope the captain will be properly taken care of, that's all."

"Oh! he's sure to be, as long as he stays here," hastily asserted Elmer, falling headlong into the pit his companion had dug so slyly for his feet; "because she said she meant to take the case in her own charge, after hearing me tell how the few men of the old Company G had chosen to go back into the land of the Boche, and bring their beloved commander

out. So you must know he'll suffer for nothing so long as she is there to take care of our commander."

"Huh! do you mean Miss Nellie, Elmer?" asked the other directly, and at that plain question the top sergeant realized his secret was out.

"Just what I do," he admitted. "What's the use trying to dodge, when such a persistent fellow as you is on the scent? She wished to be remembered to you, by the way, Amos. And they do say Nellie is the angel of that same field hospital; her smile being worth more than most of the medicine given."

"Sure thing, I can well believe it," chuckled Amos, with a sly wink that made his companion grin guiltily.

They were kept at this point in the rear for some time, while the remnant of Company G rested, and recovered in a small measure from its strenuous labor in Belleau Wood. Then by degrees it was built up to standard strength, other fragments of equally heroic commands being amalgamated with what was left of Cap. Fuller's company.

Meanwhile the fighting went on with undiminished fury day after day.

Those marines had come to gain a new name among the Germans, as was learned from prisoners taken. It was "Devil Dogs," given doubtless in appreciation of the really furious manner in which they always fought, and never gave up anything they had fastened their clutches on.

Strange as it might appear the boys delighted in the nick-name. It seemed to be just what they considered themselves; and they always mentioned it with a sense of genuine pride; even as those fierce French Alsatian fighters took pleasure in being dubbed by the Germans the "Blue Devils."

In time Belleau Wood was wholly wrested from the Hun, although a heavy price was paid before this came about. After that the advance was more rapid. Lucy-le-Boege came next, and was gobbled up; after which the rather important town of Bouresches came in the line of further advance.

Elmer learning this became doubly eager to be sent once more to the firing front. That was the identical town mentioned to him by Nellie, when she confided her story of concealed treasure-trove to his charge. He had promised to do what he could to locate her

property before the plotting Antoine discovered it, in prowling around the place; and was consequently quite elated when finally the order came for the new company to proceed to the front for action.

Amos was just about as well pleased also, though for quite a different reason. As yet there was no visible sign that Captain Fuller's urgent recommendations with regard to possible promotions were bearing any fruit. Amos yearned to see a sergeant's chevrons on his sleeve, and hoped that given yet another opportunity to distinguish himself the reward would be forthcoming.

So it came about that once again the two young marines found themselves stationed where the roar of big guns fretted the air, even far into the night, as the retreating Huns amused themselves, and wasted some of their surplus ammunition, in bombarding towns and railroad centres far back of the American front, so as to weaken them through making it difficult for the reserves to get up, if urgently needed the following day.

It seemed like old times, both of them declared, as they listened to the din that resembled a score of giant anvils being pounded by

unseen blacksmiths. The frequent brilliant flash that told of bursting shells gave them the same old familiar thrill of expectancy, for no soldier ever entirely got over wondering where the next monster missile would fall, and if it had his particular number inscribed on it.

"This seems something like business," remarked Elmer, as they burrowed in the hole they had dug between them for a night's lodging, expecting to quit it with the morning, when the advance would doubtless be resumed.

"Queer how a fellow can get so accustomed to that awful row, Elmer, he actually misses it; and the night seems frightfully still when his ears stop being dinned by the racket of big guns, bursting of falling shells, and such things."

"Oh! that's a well known fact," remarked Elmer. "Most city people lie awake all night long when first going to the country. The silence is oppressive to them, they say. They notice every creaking shutter; and if a limb happens to rub against the eaves, swung by the night air, it sets them wild. But they get used to it in time."

On the following day the marines went forward once more, despite the delaying tactics

of the opposing Huns. The Americans seemed to know just how to manœuvre so as to outwit the Germans, for they gradually pressed the others back. By now Fritz had become so opposed to coming to grips with Sammy that when he learned the Yanks were bent on attaining a certain point he invariably yielded it over after putting up a certain amount of stubborn resistance. What contact Heine had already experienced at close quarters with those keen-pointed bayonets of the Americans seemed to have given him a healthy respect for the same, and he apparently did not "hanker," as Amos called it, for further acquaintance with cold steel.

When the afternoon drew near a close the Yanks were in sight of Bouresches. In the distance could be seen church spires, and houses, that would indicate a town of considerable importance; though they knew very well nothing was apt to be left standing by the merciless Huns after they found themselves compelled to release the place from their clutches.

"I wonder if I'll be able to learn where the former home of Madame Maillard is located?" Elmer was saying, as with his chum he sat



munching his ample if simple supper, while the summer twilight gathered about them, and their comrades lay around at rest after a hard day's work.

"Oh! you can talk enough French to give that name," said Amos, who knew all about the affair by now, and was heartily hoping Elmer would take him along on the principle that two heads are better than one. "Some old inhabitant will be glad to point out the ruin of the mansion, for of course it'll be reduced to ashes long before we get there."

"Here's hoping that no one has bothered looking under the big hearth stone," Elmer went on to say. "But do you know I more than half expect to come on Antoine hanging about the place."

"If he's really alive, as we seem to believe, from what Nellie said, and is bent on getting hold of his aunt's treasure-trove," Amos reflectively said, "I wouldn't be one bit surprised if we might strike him there when we go to look."

He put this out as a feeler. Elmer smiled broadly, and nodded his head.

"To be sure we will, old top," he told his companion; and that seemed to settle matters,

in the opinion of Amos; who understood that he was counted in as a member of the searching party, which fact pleased him not a little.

That night did not differ from many others which the advancing marines had experienced of late. The Huns kept busy all night long. Guns roared frequently and innumerable shells of vast size were hurled along the entire front. These were sent somewhat at random, for their plane scouts had not been allowed to go far back of the Yank line to take photographs of important places; but there was always a chance that now and then one might do great damage.

Besides this, as in their retreat they would be compelled to abandon vast quantities of accumulated munitions which would have to be blown up in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Americans, no doubt the German High command worked on the principle that it would be much better to explode as many of these shells as possible back of the enemy front.

Besides this they must have put in most of the night destroying stores that had been gathered in the town, as well as blowing up

some of the principal buildings so as to leave it an utter ruin, their usual way.

Despite all this row the two comrades slept decently enough, though twice aroused by alarms that proved to be without foundation; for the Germans really made no attempt at attack. The fact of the matter was they were already beginning to feel dazed on account of the unexpected fierceness with which the Yanks were conducting their "push," and had by now adopted a system that took on a purely defensive aspect. All the attacking in the future would come from the Americans; the initiative had already been wrested from the hands of the Boche; who only seemed bent on staving off the inevitable as long as possible.

Toward morning the frightful noise simmered down. Possibly about all the damage possible had been accomplished, and the Huns were resting on their arms.

Of course the usual cunning traps would also have been set, designed to catch the Americans off their guard, when they came forward in their customary impetuous way that would not be denied. There were apt to be all sorts of sly pitfalls dug to take them by surprise. Innocent looking things upon being

disturbed would set off a mine, it might be; abandoned helmets, so eagerly seized as war trophies by the Yanks, itching to send them home, were apt to cause the discharge of a concealed bomb that might blow the unlucky Sammy to pieces.

So many things like this had taken place every day that strict orders had gone forth compelling the marines to be suspicious of even the most trifling article; so that even a match-safe lying on the ground was stirred by a long stick before being taken possession of as a memento of the advance.

They would undoubtedly see considerable more of action before the armistice demanded by the defeated Hun armies came into effect, and perhaps afterwards also, if any of the marines got as far as the Rhine; but we cannot follow their fortunes any further in this volume. Perhaps at some later day the subject may be taken up again, and another story told covering those doings of the two surviving members of old Cap Fuller's gallant Company G. Until that time we must say goodbye, wishing good luck to all the boys who went forth from every part of our great country, and offered their services to Uncle Sam,

whether in the regular army; the navy, with the destroyers and battleships; the submarine chasers; and last but far from least the wonderful Marine Corps, always the "first to fight," no matter when or where called upon in the line of duty.

THE END

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